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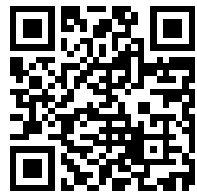

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A NAVAL SCRAP-BOOK

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ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD H. BACON, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.
[*Frontispiece*

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A
NAVAL SCRAP-BOOK

FIRST PART

1877—1900

BY
ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD H. BACON
K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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PREFACE

I HAVE often been asked to write my reminiscences, but hitherto have hesitated to do so; since, unless confidences are betrayed or scandal is repeated, the records of the life of an ordinary individual are apt to contain little of interest to the general public.

It, however, occurred to me that this might be somewhat mitigated if a few of the peculiar happenings to other men and also certain tales, traditional in the Navy but hitherto not committed to print, were woven into an account of sea life in the Royal Navy during the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries. Moreover, such a miscellany may have an interest not merely to the present generation, but in future years it may supply a little local colour to illuminate one particular period for those who may care to study the past history of the Navy.

Soon after commencing I found that a single volume would be unwieldy to the reader. I therefore decided to complete the first volume and leave the compilation of the second for some future occasion, should the reception accorded to the former warrant such an attempt.

The line of separation of the two volumes was obviously the beginning of the year 1900, since that year divides in a most remarkable manner the Old from the New Navy.

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The present volume deals with the Old Navy of masts and sails, muzzle-loading guns, short fighting ranges, and obscure tactics; while glimpses are afforded both of the old crews of lithe, active, catlike men of poor education, but giants in muscle and pluck, and also of their officers with whom the habits and manners of the late years of the Georges in some cases still lingered.

In the second volume, if it is ever written, I hope to deal with happenings during the time that I started the submarine boats in the Navy, when assistant to Lord Fisher during the time that he initiated his great naval reforms, when I was Captain of the first *Dreadnought*, as Director of Naval Ordnance at the Admiralty, as Managing Director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, my time on the Western Front, and of my command at Dover during the Great War; I propose also to touch on the lessons of Coronel, the Dardanelles, and Jutland.

It may perhaps seem to some as if the stories contained in this volume ridicule and caricature the Old Navy and show it at its worst. This is not intentional; but it must be remembered that it is the ultra-normal and the bizarre that amuse and remain in the memory. Let those who require an eulogy of the officers and men of the British Navy during the years of which I have written study the work of that service in the Great War.

It was through the accumulated tradition of the past, through the labours of those who lived and went before, through their clear thinking and experimenting, their organising powers, and through their self-sacrifice, that sane and victorious war was waged at the most

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critical period of the life of our Empire. The love of the nation for the Old Navy was responsible for much serious wrong done to the reputation of the most able of the officers in the New Navy. Doings of the Old Navy, of hand-to-hand and ship-to-ship fighting, with its spectacular incidents and records of heroism, had from youth up stirred the blood and the emotions of the nation, and therefore bitter disappointment was felt at the undramatic and prosaic *dénouement* of the only modern fleet action that was fought.

Our people, steeped in the accounts of the old sea victories, were untutored in modern sane sea fighting, and so failed lamentably to discriminate between gold and tinsel in the conduct of our warfare on the sea.

Spectacular fighting has vanished with the Old Navy, and with it much also that was picturesque in the manners and customs at sea. We may read and smile at a great deal that has happened and at things that were done, but amusement should never be allowed to cloud our minds to the debt we owe to those veterans whose pride it was to prepare the Navy for a war in which, to their sorrow, they were fated never actively to participate.

R. H. B.

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A NAVAL SCRAP-BOOK

CHAPTER I

1863–1879

EARLY LIFE

Early life—Sussex—Rural love-making—An undecided Rector—A clerical record—An unsympathetic governess—The *Britannia*—The Navy at that time—Tenacity of old ideas—Teaching—Cadet etiquette—Climbing aloft—Ship's corporal supervising cadets—A bad system—Punishment—The royal princes—The Prince and Princess of Wales visit the ship—A bad examiner—The *Eurydice* squall—Passing out—The fifth term.

I SUPPOSE I inherited a love of the sea from my great-grandfather who was a sea captain and afterwards an Elder Brother of Trinity House. He also, among other activities, pioneered the iron industry in South Wales.

My mother's great-grandmother was the wife of the Governor of Sumatra in the times when relations between England and France were strained to their utmost limit. On one occasion when her husband was up country with his troops dealing with some turbulent natives, a French frigate anchored off the fort. Not knowing whether the two countries were at peace or war, the lady grasped the nettle firmly, asked the Captain to lunch, then called dinner, dressed all the women in their husbands' uniforms and dotted them about on the ramparts outside the range of accurate vision. During dinner she made them roll casks of

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stones overhead, which noise she explained was made by the artillery-men exercising at gun-drill. The Captain, who had had the intention of attacking the place, decided that it was too strongly held and equipped, and sailed away, thinking that the adventure would be a little too risky.

The sea, and oversea life, formed therefore a part of the lives of my forbears—and although I was brought up inland in Sussex, well away from the sea, I early determined to enter the Navy.

My memories of Sussex are chiefly lingering visions of its beauties. Glorious views with the South Downs ever present as a background, the "hangers" or deep-cut lanes with trees arching overhead, the high green hedges, the numberless wild flowers, the woods carpeted with wild strawberries, daffodils, bluebells, and violets, all in their season; and in winter the fields flooded by the Arun forming one vast lake, in which the winter sunsets, fiery and crimson as blood, were reflected in vivid contrast to the snow-covered ground and the grey leafless trees.

The old villagers in those days often were the direct descendants of generations who for centuries had worked on the same farm and done the same work. One family bore the name and claimed lineage to the old barons who owned the land in ages gone by. Most of the men and women had never been in a train or travelled twenty miles from the place where they had been born. Slow of brain, they were even slower of speech, doubling the syllables as they spoke: "ga-ate" for "gate," "pa-apper" for "paper," and so on. They were a God-fearing, hard-working lot, who reared families of eight and nine on twelve shillings a week.

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They saw meat only on Sundays, and not always then, but they had inherited the same slow and impassive temperament that enabled their fathers to win the battle of Waterloo, when time after time the Sussex men held their ground and stood firm under the fire of the French guns and the furious charges of Ney's magnificent cavalry.

There was very little crime or drunkenness. The really bad man of the district was one who was so intensely jealous of his wife that he strewed sand completely round the cottage, and beat her if he saw a footmark—hers or another's—on it. A wife-beater was invariably treated to "rough music"; when the neighbours who assisted at this rite assembled with pots and pans and beat them discordantly outside his cottage. The noise was carried a long distance on a still evening, and thus the delinquencies of the offender were broadcasted for miles around.

Their rural courtings even were somewhat lethargic. The following conversation between an engaged couple was overheard:

Maid: Dost love me, John?

Swain: I've told thee so.

Maid: Kiss me, John.

Swain: Presentlye.

At the end of a wedding ceremony the bridegroom and the best man usually walked away together, leaving the bride and her bridesmaid to follow on behind.

The neighbourhood, that is a visiting radius of twelve miles, consisted of charming people, old and young. The county families were the descendants of generations of the same stock; the parsons were of the

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old type, gentlemen by birth, mostly if not all University men, who were the mainstays of their respective parishes. In those days "business" and "the City" were still looked down on as being scarcely fit occupations for younger sons; the Church was therefore well supplied.

Eccentrics of course there were, as for instance the Rector who wrote to the Bishop saying he would much like "to marry one of the Right Reverend gentleman's three daughters; he did not much mind which, but he rather preferred Miss Mary!"

Another, old Dr. Chomondley, a Wrangler and profound mathematician, actually performed the feat of sitting on a branch and cutting it off between himself and the tree! I remember going with my mother to inquire how he was mending. He had broken a rib or two and an arm.

There is still living, at the time of writing, I am truly glad to say, a clergyman, and very old friend, who, on the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar, preached in his parish church the same sermon that his father had preached in the same church the Sunday after the news of that battle had reached England. This must be nearly a record of filial continuity of clerical service.

Simple indeed the folk were; even so educated a person as the yeoman farmer's wife drove back in terror to her farm on hearing for the first time the noise made by the wind in the newly erected telegraph wires—thinking, as she said, that "the French were coming." The tradition of the ogre Bonaparte took a long time to die.

My father, when a boy, was the owner of the dog

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WIGGONHOLT RECTORY.

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made famous by being painted by Landseer. The picture was called "A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society," but as a matter of fact the dog never went into any water in his life; his chief labour was that of carrying his young master's books to school. Landseer asked permission to paint the dog, which when sent walked straight up the studio and lay down on the dais, in the position in which he was painted, Landseer merely turning the dais into a stone quay with a ringbolt in it.

Talking of dogs reminds me of a tale told me in my early youth by an unimpeachable relative. A retriever, a great friend of the family, and even a greater friend of the cat, was one day out walking with them and frisking ahead, when suddenly he came to heel and walked quietly, refusing all efforts to make him play. On arrival home, thinking that he must be ill, they followed him to the stable, where they saw him go straight up to the cat, open his mouth, when out jumped a mouse which the cat promptly caught. He must have walked at least a mile with the mouse alive in his mouth.

After a happy time in the nursery we advanced to the schoolroom, and here our troubles began. The cause of our tribulation was a Scotch governess. Now let me at once confess that there never was a more righteous or a more conscientious woman, but she was of a type that should never have been allowed within half a mile of a child. Children should associate with people who are human, and whose ideas are largely in sympathy with the joys and sorrows of this world, and not fixed almost exclusively on those of the world to come. In the first place, she was

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firmly convinced that every infant was born chock full of original sin, and that this sin had to be eradicated. In all our actions, good or bad, she hunted for the particular sin that she was convinced had been the actuating cause. If we were elated because we had done a lesson well, it was wicked pride; if we were downcast, it was that demon despondency. Gilbert's "Mikado," who "made the punishment fit the crime," was not in it with "Sally Martha"—as we irreverently called her—in making original sin account for each and every one of our actions. I remember so well how hard it seemed that everything wrong we did was done by our wicked selves, and was our own wicked fault; but that everything we did that was right was the result of "the Spirit of God working in us," for which we should be duly thankful, but for which we deserved no credit. I used to think that the Almighty might have spared to us one little crumb of credit for our good actions.

My first introduction to Sally Martha took place before I joined the schoolroom professionally. I happened to look in at the door, and seeing an austere person sitting in solemn state backed out again. I was met with the Scotch idiom, "Come away." So, strictly according to orders, I took one pace forward, then turned and ran. However, I was caught, taken on her knee and read a chapter of the Old Testament. I remember it was about the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. When the lady had finished she asked me if I did not think the Bible better than story books. In those days I was accustomed to tell the truth, and my answer immediately and irretrievably earned me a reputation for original sin of the blackest description.

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Incident after incident float back to memory of injustice done, but always from the highest motives under the cloak of religion, and with the intent to kill the original sin in me. I cannot help thinking that I must have had my full share of that commodity, for it never seemed to diminish in quantity.

In time I went to school, and after three more or less happy years I joined the *Britannia* as a naval cadet.

The *Britannia* of 1877 was a far more humble training establishment than the present R.N. College at Dartmouth. In my early days the mere conception of a training ship for naval cadets was looked on as a great achievement. Not many years before I joined the Navy, boys, after being examined by a Board of Post Captains in a very perfunctory manner, were passed and sent straight to a receiving ship to await a seagoing appointment. A worse system could hardly be imagined, since boys, straight from home, were often brought into contact with an undesirable senior, whose career was spent in harbour ships since his questionable records prevented his being employed in seagoing ships. Moreover, since the receiving ships were permanently in harbour, the boys lacked that strict discipline and supervision which are so necessary during early life at sea. Under such conditions the education of midshipmen in their profession was largely a matter of chance, they were forced to pick up their knowledge as best they could. Of course the best of them always did well, since mere disadvantage will never stop youth and energy: it is not the best boys who suffer severely from the fact that education may be made difficult to obtain; but it is the average

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youth, who will not battle with fate, who falls hopelessly behind unless education is more or less forced upon him. The *Britannia* probably did not produce any officers better than the best who had gone before, but it most certainly did improve vastly the general run of naval officers.

The Navy at that time was changing radically, but the change was so slow that it was hardly apparent to most of those serving in it. Steam was gradually superseding the wind as a motive power, iron was ousting wood in construction, steel was gradually superseding iron, guns were growing in size though not greatly in range. True it was that the old three-decker was a thing of the past, but the best of our battleships still were rigged with masts, yards, and sails as well as being provided with engines. They had armour and heavy guns, but the fighting range was only about thirteen hundred yards. Close action was still considered to be the correct tactic, and the ram, a weapon that could only be used on actual contact, was reckoned as second only to gunfire.

The torpedo, which tottered for four hundred yards at a speed of seven knots; gun-cotton charges on spars stuck out from the ship to explode under the bottom of an enemy as he brushed past having failed to ram; the Harvey torpedo towed on the quarter, for a similar purpose—all these were weapons of close action. Fleet tactics, that is the joint movements of ships for a common purpose, were dim visions of the future.

Sail power, with its attendant costly rigging, was still installed from a fear of failure on the part of the engines; so that, although some most important

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changes had already taken place, the outlook and ideas of naval officers remained much the same as they were at the time of the Battle of Trafalgar. The lore of the mast and sail, and the art of handling a ship under sail, were still considered to be the knowledge pre-eminently necessary to the officers and seamen, while skill in every other direction took a back place.

How tenaciously sails were kept in ships-of-war, and how the belief in close action remained for another twenty years we shall see later. Nor were these clingings to old ideas and doctrines to be wondered at considering that the senior officers, on whom rested the ordering and governing of the Navy, had from their earliest days been steeped in sailing-ship lore, and such lore in many cases constituted the bulk, if not the entirety, of their professional knowledge. On the other hand, although the seamanship of masts and sails was considered of paramount importance, the necessity of educating the youngsters in navigation and elementary mathematics had been properly recognised, so in the *Britannia* we were taught these subjects, as well as drawing, both freehand and perspective, and French. The inclusion of drawing in the curriculum often puzzled me. Although a charming accomplishment, it is one that only the gifted can use to advantage, and they, worse luck, are few in number. I believe the motive that actuated the Board of Admiralty was to enable officers to sketch headlands as they passed near the land with a view to future recognition. A poor return for hours of futile labour on the part of the average naval cadet.

The teaching in the *Britannia* was therefore divided into three main categories: *study*, that is

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mathematics and navigation; *out of study*, i.e. French and drawing; and lastly, *seamanship*, which was purely sailing-ship lore and signals.

The boys were divided into four "terms" or entries. A new entry joined every six months, and each entry left after completing their fourth term. Custom, as in all boyish communities, ruled us with a rod of iron. A fourth-term boy could fag a first- or second-term, a third- could fag a first-term only. The first and second terms were bound to have a term fight. It was bad taste to eat butter, as the excellent Devonshire butter was decreed to be grease. The Sunday chicken was taboo, as custom pronounced it to be sea-gull, etc. etc. No one yet has, or I suppose ever will, fathom the reason why boys are such perfect slaves to school etiquette. It is a marvel that each generation should be as blindly foolish as the one before, especially when to be so is frequently at the expense of their small stomachs.

The *Britannia* itself was an establishment of two ships, a three-decker and a two-decker, the latter being called the *Hindustan*; they were joined by a bridge. In winter the decks were cold but healthy. Every morning we were turned out by terms and had to splash in a salt-water bath, and while dressing washed in our chests. Economy of space had decreed that a midshipman's wash basin should be installed inside his chest, a dangerous place at sea in bad weather when any splash was bound to filter down into the clothes below. Even in harbour careful washing was a necessity.

Our life in the *Britannia* was largely one of open air and draughts, but we all thrived, and we soon

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learned to climb like monkeys. The foremast was fully rigged up to the royal truck ; we were allowed to climb the rigging and to lay out on the yards whenever we liked, and sometines in the mornings we loosed the sails for exercise.

Most people probably have noticed that on the masts of square-rigged ships there is a staging near the top of the lower masts. This is called a " top," it really provides a platform for spreading out the lower ends of the rigging of the mast above, so as to enable that rigging to support its mast in a sideway direction. This rigging is supported under the top by iron stays which run from the edge of the top to a short distance down the lower mast, and so stick out nearly at right angles from the lower rigging. These " futtock shrouds " as they are called have rope steps called " ratlines " seized across them to form rope ladders to enable the seamen to climb up into the tops when sent aloft for any purpose. When climbing up over the edge of the top by means of these, the position of the climber is not unlike that of a fly on the ceiling, his chest being up and his back down. The other way of entering the top is by a hole through the top close to the mast, which requires no gymnastics. This is called the " lubbers' hole," since it is supposed that it is only used by those without nerve. There is nothing difficult in climbing into the top over the futtocks, but a little determination is required when doing it for the first time ; after once it has been accomplished this route becomes a matter of course. There is no danger except in the single case of the ratline you are holding, or on which you are standing, breaking when you are changing either the other hand

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or the other foot; then you are done for. It was a matter of honour to go over the futtocks in your second term in the *Britannia*; most cadets did it in their first term.

A friend once told me that a French officer in a burst of confidence said to him: "Ah! our men will never be sailors like yours. Yours always go over the futtocks, ours all go through the lubbers' hole." A truly fundamental difference in temperament and training.

Another unwritten law was that each cadet should climb up and touch the "jack"; this is an iron bar at the head of the highest mast but one. A further feat, not obligatory, but generally accomplished, was to climb still higher and shin up the highest mast of all and touch the "truck," that is the round piece of wood which caps the mast. The greatest of all feats was to climb up and stand on the truck, holding on to the upright iron of the lightning-conductor. This piece of gymnastics was not allowed by the authorities, who had in the background of their minds visions of the recriminations of mothers should accidents occur. They consequently forbade the feat; it was therefore not infrequently performed.

In our day the cadets were under the supervision of ordinary ship's policemen who had risen from the ranks. These were responsible for all regulations being carried out, and it was their business to report any cadet infringing them. The system was not good and led to friction, as the cadets never liked being policed by petty officers. When the reorganisation of the *Britannia* took place and the colleges of Dartmouth and Osborne were instituted, this system was

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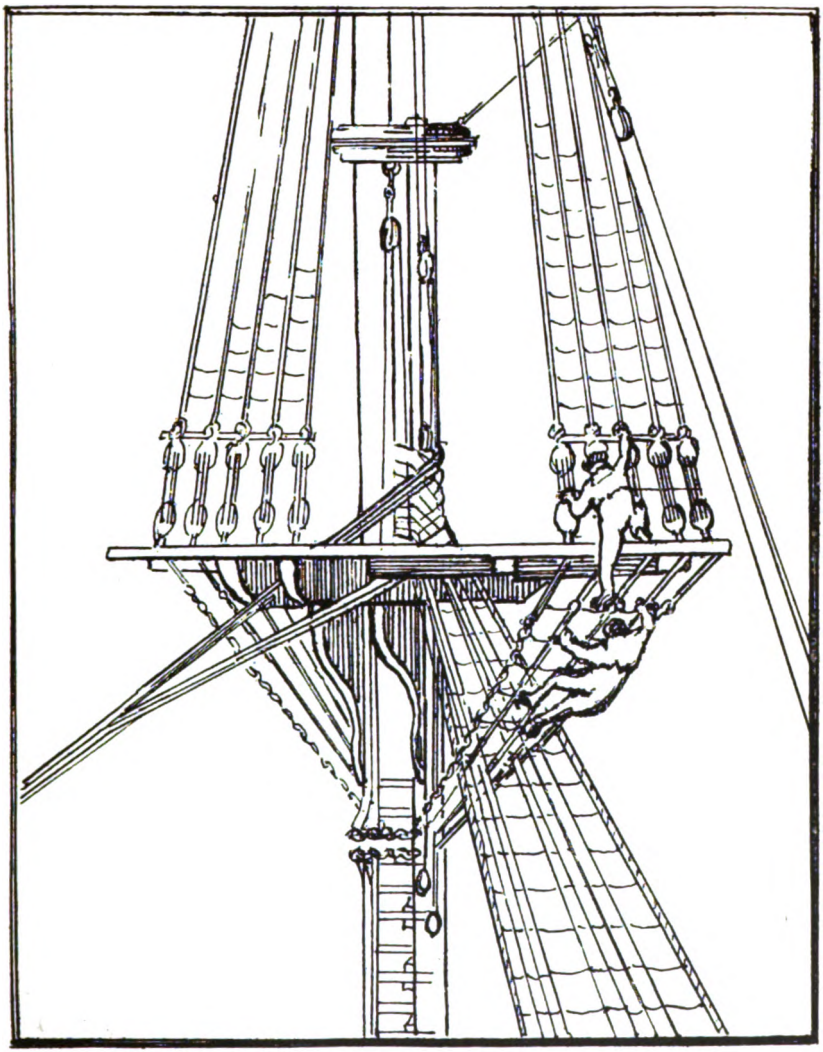

THE FUTTOCK RIGGING.

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abolished and a Lieutenant had sole charge of each term, so that all the supervision was entirely done by officers, which is a very much better arrangement. Life as a whole was very pleasant—plenty of work, boat-pulling, sailing, and games.

A gunboat called the *Dapper* acted as tender to the *Britannia*, on board of which we used to drill aloft. She was commanded by Lieutenant Gartside Tippinge, who, needless to say, I, as a small naval cadet, looked up to with due veneration. Little did I think that that gallant officer would be killed in action off the Belgian coast forty years afterwards while serving under my command.

Inattention in class was rewarded with a "mod," which stood for "moderate attention" and carried with it an hour's drill with heavy Brown Bess rifles, which made the arms and back ache and ache again. The three worst punishments for a cadet were for him to be put into the second class (when the delinquent wore a white tape sewn round his arm), birching, and cells. They were all rare, and reserved for hardened offenders.

The two young princes, Prince Edward and Prince George, joined at the beginning of our second term; they entered into all our games and work, but had separate cabins. At the end of our third term their Royal parents, the Prince and Princess of Wales, came down and gave away the prizes, and Her Royal Highness pinned the badges on the arms of those selected to be Cadet Captains. I happened to be one of these, and to this day I remember how willingly I would have welcomed the seams in the deck to have opened and swallowed me up rather than to

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go through an ordeal so trying to a shy nature. How absurd it seems now, but how real it was then!

One incident I must touch on, as it carries a lesson to examiners. At the end of our third term the Commander examined us in seamanship; I sat on the left of a cadet called Treherne, and we two ran neck-and-neck as regards knowledge of seamanship. When any cadet could not answer a question, the Commander, having little experience in examining, passed it round the class, and every time Treherne answered it. Every one of those questions that he answered I also could have answered; only one was missed by him, and that neither of us could answer. I doubt, moreover, if any officer on the Active List of the Navy to-day could say, without looking up in a technical dictionary, where the "chesstrees" of a frigate were. The point of the episode, however, was that the Commander while congratulating Treherne on passing so good an examination, said I also had done well, but that it was not due to knowledge, but because I had sat next to Treherne! I have never forgotten the feeling of injustice created by the remark. Of course no examiner of experience ever allows a succession of questions to be answered by one candidate only.

I remember one Sunday standing on the beach with an old seaman when a furious squall tore down the river, quickly lashing up the water. "That," said the sailor, "is the sort of squall to capsize a ship if she is not properly handled." It was the squall that farther east capsized the *Eurydice* off the Isle of Wight.

At the end of our fourth term we passed our final

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examinations, and six of us obtained the necessary first-class certificates in each of the three studies, seamanship, mathematics, and out of study, and therefore became midshipmen without further time at sea as naval cadets. A record was created by so large a number passing out as midshipmen; one, two, or a maximum of three being the usual number. Of course it was generally said that we had had an easy examination; but when we met again at Greenwich College to pass for sub-lieutenants, the *Britannia* results were justified.

Early in 1877 it became apparent to the authorities that several of the fourth term stood but little chance of passing their final examinations. As several of these boys were the sons of distinguished admirals, all those who failed were given an extra term, so for six months we had five terms of cadets. Some of those salved became ornaments to the Service, others did not.

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CHAPTER II

1879

H.M.S. "ALEXANDRA"

An Indian troopship—The difficulties of a Captain—Eccentricity—A life of isolation—Refusals to dine—Insanity among Captains—An unfortunate remark—My experience of a dangerous Captain—A temporary Bishop—The Captain who stole the postage stamps—The *Alexandra* ashore—A lower-deck poet—Joining a ship for the first time—Sir Geoffrey Hornby—The Admiral's breakfast—Captain Fitzroy—A good officer of the watch—A strict service ship—Wyatt Rawson—Arthur Ewart—A severe punishment—Snipe shooting—Lindsay Brine court martial—Captain Heneage's reply—Enigmatical answers—An earthquake—Return to Malta.

In January 1879 I left Portsmouth in the *Crocodile* to join the *Alexandra*, the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron. The *Crocodile* was one of the old Indian troopships manned by officers and men of the Royal Navy, a system hated by the Army because of the strict, perhaps unnecessarily strict, discipline that ruled in these troopers. They were very expensive as regards upkeep, more than averagely uncomfortable, slow and uneconomical in steaming, so that their abolition was a wise measure.

The Captain of a trooper not only had to see that discipline was enforced as regards the male portion of his cargo, but had also to settle disputes among the ladies, to which the close quarters of the ladies' cabin often gave rise. It was on board one of these ships that the Solomon in command gave the original decision in a dispute as to precedence in bathing: that the *oldest lady* should bathe first. Report said

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that the younger ladies splashed in sole possession, while the two elderly disputants relinquished bathing for the remainder of the trip.

One well-known Captain afterwards became eccentric, and made it a custom, among other peculiarities, always and in all weathers to wear a white tall hat.

Eccentricity to the verge of madness was not uncommon among captains in the old days in the Navy when ships were stationed for four or five years on foreign stations, during which time the Captain lived in isolation. This principle of isolating the Captain of a ship is inviolate even to this day. He lives alone and feeds alone, unless he invites any of his officers to lunch or dine, otherwise he meets his officers only on deck on duty, or perhaps for a ramble ashore. It is a great change of life to a man who perhaps for twenty-five years had lived in gunroom and wardroom messes, teeming with messmates and good fellowship. This seclusion was a necessity in the old days of long commissions and distant stations, heat and shortness of tempers. It was not uncommon to find a small ship officers' mess where no one occupant spoke to another, and quarrels aggravated by temperature and livers assumed absurd dimensions. No! it was well for the Captain to live apart and not mix promiscuously among those to whom his word was even more than law.

Even under these conditions peace between a Captain and his officers was not always kept. There was a notable instance when each officer in turn, having some grievance against the Captain, refused his invitations to dine. Not to be outdone, he gave

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them each in turn a written order to dine. This they could not refuse to obey, but although they sat through the dinner, they could, and did, refuse to eat, and by no extension of powers could a Captain look on loss of appetite as mutiny.

We probably all remember the tale, very typical and true in fact, of the Captain who always took off his uniform to read his Bible, since in uniform he could recognise no higher authority than himself.

This isolation, though necessary, was bad for the individual; peculiarities were bred and fostered till a few became eccentric and at times insane. There was one Captain of a ship who was asked by the Governor of a Colony to dine on the Queen's birthday, and who on receiving the invitation, fourteen days before the event, refused on the plea that he had a headache.

Naturally the Governor was incensed at this cavalier way of answering an official invitation and reported the matter to the Admiral commanding on the station. Our friend the Captain, however, though eccentric showed astuteness in his defence, which was merely a laconic reply: "That he had had a headache every day for the last six months and he did not see why he should be spared one on the Queen's birthday."

Talking of the Queen's birthday dinner reminds me of the famous one when to avoid the expense a Commander-in-Chief took his flagship away from the fleet to a small harbour a few miles off and left the Rear-Admiral to stand the cost of the dinner, while he himself drove in and dined at the local club at his Flag-Lieutenant's expense.

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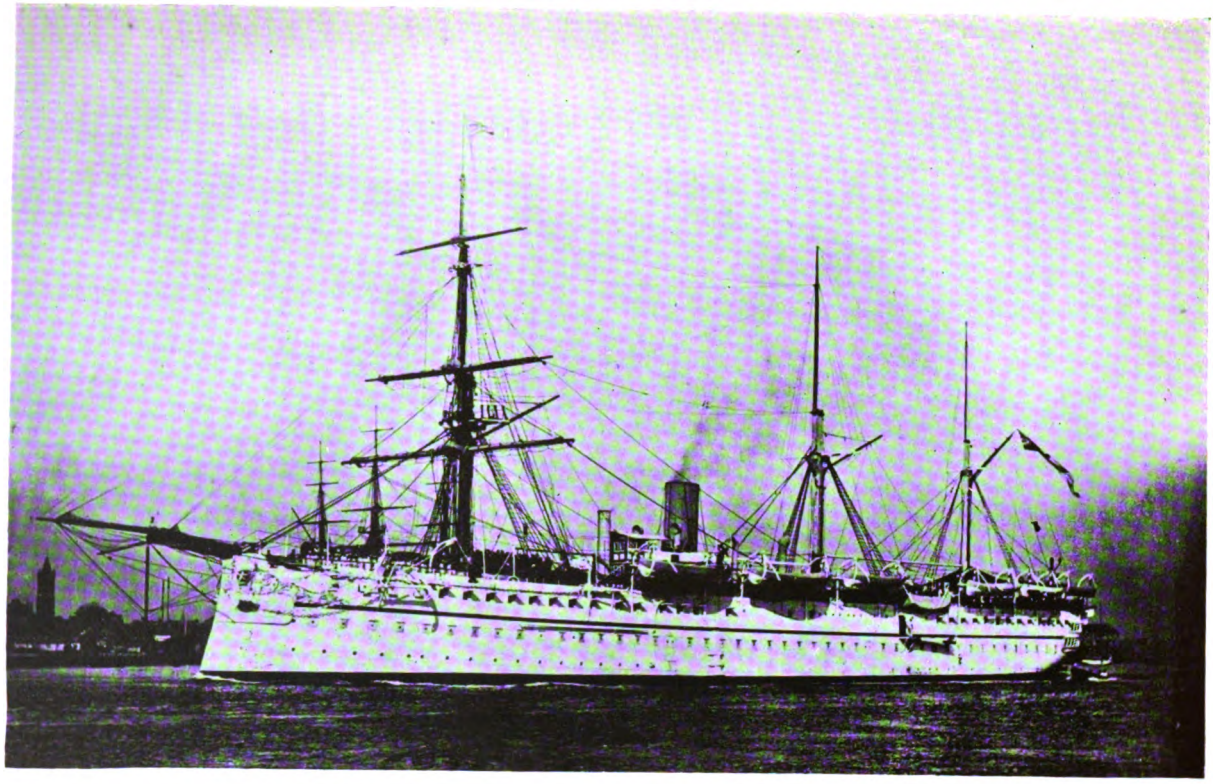

H.M.S. "CROCODILE." [*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

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There was no more awkward position for a second-in-command in those days, when ships were often isolated for months together, than to find his Captain was becoming sufficiently eccentric to be dangerous from a professional point of view. To place a Captain under restraint meant the risk of the second-in-command being court-martialled for mutiny, and finding himself subsequently saddled with the onus of proving his charge of insanity. To prove insanity is often difficult, since not only are the incipient insane cunning, but experts do not always agree as to what does constitute insanity, and the opinion of the Medical Officer of the ship would, of course, be valueless compared with the subsequent opinion of a Medical Board. One well-known case of this happened within my memory when the Captain recovered, was pronounced sane, and the First Lieutenant suffered. It was necessary for the Admiralty to be on the side of severity in this matter, since it was possible that the desire to rid the ship of an unpopular captain might lead to collusion, and consequently for mere peculiarities to be magnified into insanity; so eccentric captains had to be carefully treated by those under them.

I remember one case of a very small gunboat, whose Captain was immensely unpopular on board, so much so that his First Lieutenant, who was in rank only a sub-lieutenant, in an unguarded moment said publicly that he was certain one day he would push him overboard. On the very next cruise, in a gale of wind, the Sub-Lieutenant and the Captain were alone on the bridge and the Captain fell overboard and was drowned.

There is absolutely no doubt that while the Captain

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was going down the ladder from the bridge to the upper deck the ship gave a heavy lurch and he slipped under the hand-rail and shot over the side. The Sub-Lieutenant was immensely distressed, but the tale of his unfortunate utterance got about and he never afterwards thrived in his profession.

Personally, I only served with one Captain who gave me cause for anxiety, and this was largely, perhaps, through defective eyesight. His vision seemed perverted, and dangerous conditions appeared safe, and at times safe positions seemed to him to be dangerous. The Navigating Officer, First Lieutenant, and myself had a compact never to leave him alone with the officer of the watch on the bridge at sea; one of us always was up there to persuade and guide him tactfully, should he take unsafe ideas into his head. Once when as a single ship we sighted a squadron of four ships under a Rear-Admiral, he stood on as if intending to make the Admiral get out of our way—a heinous breach of naval etiquette, and twice I pointed out the discourtesy and the danger of collision if he persisted in his course. At last I stationed myself near the helmsman with my hand on the starboard engine telegraph ready to take charge of the ship. He only relented and gave the order five seconds before I should have done so myself from sheer necessity to avoid collision with the rear ship of the squadron. He expressed the most innocent surprise when he was subsequently skinned by a most caustic signal from the offended Rear-Admiral.

Cases of real lunacy, however, occurred: I remember the case of an engineer officer who believed himself to be a glass boiler and lay on his back all day puffing

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voluminously, being convinced that if he stopped he would burst. The saddest case of all was that of the gentlest, kindest, and most retiring of men who was suddenly taken with homicidal tendencies. The chart-house was converted into a padded room, and every precaution taken; but the ship's cat strayed within his reach, and was caught and torn limb from limb.

A certain Captain in the South Pacific appeared one day on the poop of his ship with a salmon rod, and cast long and accurately at his First Lieutenant whenever he appeared on the quarter-deck. Another, on the China Station, came on board one evening and told the First Lieutenant that he had bought a flock of sheep and that they were coming on board next morning. He explained that he intended going to a deserted island, round about which he proposed to drive the sheep in order to practise the ship's company shooting with rifles at moving objects.

On one occasion a Captain on a distant station made out an acting commission for the rank of Bishop, and rated the Chaplain of his ship accordingly, in order to enable him to consecrate a piece of ground ashore where the Captain desired to bury one of his men. He, however, took the precaution to disrate the newly made Bishop next day, by cancelling his commission.

The same officer advanced Christmas Day by one week; he then held Divine Service and all other feasts usual to that occasion. His reason, which was entered duly in the ship's log, was that the "little porkers laid in by the ship's company for their Christmas dinners were feeling the tropical heat and losing flesh; he

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thought, therefore, that the sooner they were eaten the better."

Talking of bishops reminds me of the sea tale told of Bishop Wilberforce. Once at sea he was in a gale and things were really rather bad, so much so that he went to the Captain and asked him how things stood. The Captain, knowing their danger, said, "Well, my Lord, all I can say is that we must put our trust in Providence," at which the divine ejaculated, "You don't mean to say it's come to that!"

The maddest of all—for mad he must have been—was the Captain who, within memory of man, stole the Government postage stamps. The latter-day history of this eccentric individual, whom we will call "X," is worth recording. When in China, in command of a ship, he gave an order to the accountant officer to advance him several hundred pounds, for which he duly gave him a receipt. At the end of the month, when counting the public money and checking vouchers, he sent the officer out of his cabin to fetch some papers, and during his absence he abstracted the receipt the poor fellow had previously given him and destroyed it. When the loss was discovered Captain "X" disclaimed all knowledge of the transaction and accused the accountant officer of having stolen the money, with the result that the latter committed suicide. "X" returned to England, piled up debt on to debt, and eventually was appointed to a frigate sailing to Australia. Just before sailing he wrote to his chief creditors, asked them all to dine with him at Devonport the night before his departure, when he promised to pay them in full. He wrote quite feelingly, saying that they had been very long-suffering and deserved a recognition

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of their patience. The dinner was a cheery one, but towards the end he left the table on some pretext, went on board, weighed and sailed, and left his creditors with the bill for the dinner as an additional debt.

On the way out to Australia, when counting the public money, he stole all the Government postage stamps, the loss of course falling on the accountant officer. Shortly after arriving at the station he repeated the trick of having money advanced and destroying the receipt; but unknown to him, the accountant officer, knowing his character, had substituted a copy and kept the original receipt. By this time his reputation was becoming known to the authorities, and the discipline of his ship was, if possible, worse than his deeds. He was sent to England, where he was tried by court martial, one of the charges being that of abstracting and destroying the receipt for money advanced. He denied all knowledge of the transaction. "Perhaps, Captain 'X,' you will look at that," said the prosecutor, handing him the original receipt he had given for the money. Not a bit abashed, "X" examined the document, smiled, and said, "Well, now I look at that receipt it does bring back to my mind something about the advance of money; really I think I may have been mistaken and have received the money after all." Bluff was useless. He was never heard of again.

At Malta we midshipmen and naval cadets joined the *Raleigh* for passage to the Fleet, then up the Dardanelles at anchor off Ismid, where it was waiting for Russia to relinquish her desire to annex Constantinople. The Fleet had passed through the Dardanelles

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more than a year earlier, running the risk of being fired on by the forts. The ships were all cleared for action, the boats' davits were therefore turned inboard; this affected the steering compasses, with the result that the *Alexandra*, the flagship, ran ashore near Chanak, within range of the guns; she was, however, got off without damage. Had the Turks meant business it might have been a very serious matter. The lower deck poet, regardless of Turkish and French pronunciation, chronicled the event thus:

> "The sky was dark, the clouds were black
> The night we anchored at Charnak,
> We anchored at Gallipoli
> And thus preserved our prestigéé."

At last the momentous day arrived for us to join a seagoing ship for the first time as part of its complement of officers. At 8 a.m. we climbed on board the *Alexandra*. The morning evolution, about which more anon, had just ended, the *Alexandra* had done badly, and consequently tempers were not of the best. With trepidation we mounted the bridge ladder and reported our arrival in due form to the Commander. Very rubicund of face, with round goggle eyes, he turned such a glaring glance on us that we nearly fell off the bridge. Forty-four years have past, but I remember that look now! When we knew Jerry Lake better we discounted his ferocious glances for the sake of his many good points.

The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, was the finest admiral of his time, and the father of latter-day steam tactics. The Captain, Robert O'Brien Fitzroy, was a man with an eagle eye, who had the knack of looking at the deck and telling

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you what was wrong with the highest mast. The Commander was the aforesaid Commander Lake, known to us irreverently as Jerry, and the First Lieutenant was James Lacon Hammet. A quartet of the strictest officers then serving in the Navy, among whom a midshipman was but as a grain of corn between the upper and the nether millstones.

Everyone in the Navy looked up to and respected Admiral Hornby, but he was very strict and severe, as delinquent midshipmen who sailed boats badly, or committed other sins within sight of the flagship, found out to their cost. Next morning they " breakfasted," as it was called, with " Uncle Geoff." The breakfast, which took place just before the real meal, consisted of a dressing-down very much to the point. The midshipmen, of course, left before real eating began. Every morning, however, one midshipman of the flagship had to eat real breakfast with the Admiral, Captain, and his staff. How we hated that meal! Naturally shy and overpowered by so much age and rank, and talk of affairs of State, if it had not been for the smiling face of dear old Kirkness, the Admiral's Secretary, I think we would have been too shy to eat —which, when talking of hungry midshipmen, is saying a good deal.

I have mentioned Robert O'Brien Fitzroy's eye— years after, when he was Commodore of the Training Squadron, the Service was much exercised over the vexed question whether an officer continually on watch or merely one on the look-out was the better arrangement for the Service generally. One day during the dinner hour the officer of the watch of the flagship, standing with his back to the Captain's

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cabin door, was holding forth on the uselessness of having officers continually on watch and how much better it would be to have "officers of the day" only, when the door opened and Fitzroy stood and quietly listened to the discourse. When it ended he asked the officer to accompany him round the upper deck. At every three or four paces he pointed out things that were wrong which his eye had detected: ropes not taut, rope yarns lying about, deck badly swept, yards not quite square, a piece of clothing hidden away, etc.; by the time the circuit was completed the officer was mere pulp. The séance ended by Fitzroy saying: "Mr. Jones, perhaps you will now see the use of a GOOD officer of the watch."

The *Alexandra* was what in those days was called a "strict service ship"—that is, all Admiralty regulations were, as far as possible, carried out to the letter. It is usually accepted that no one can obey both the "King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions" and the Bible; no one, in fact, ever has or ever will carry out all the regulations to the letter. They are, however, framed in an extremely ingenious manner, since whatever may go wrong in the ship they ensure that some regulation contained in them shall have been broken and therefore that someone is to blame.

The midshipmen kept watch walking up and down opposite sides of the quarter-deck, never speaking except in the meal hours when they were allowed to walk together. One midshipman in each watch had to keep night watch in harbour, walking up and down the quarter-deck, and all the midshipmen kept night watch at sea. Oh! the centuries that those harbour night

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watches seemed will never be forgotten. Not a thing to break the absolute fag of walking up and down for four hours on end, except to go round the ship below every hour and see that all was correct. The lieutenants kept watch almost as strictly, but mine sat in a chair and studied Turkish.

One night when the Fleet was at anchor in Besika Bay a signal made to the ships was not observed by one of them for a quarter of an hour. Next morning an inquiry was held and it was found that the officer of the watch had been reading in her chart house. This was a breach of the orders of the ship, so, in accordance with the strict discipline of the day, a warrant was issued for him to be tried by court martial. Wyatt Rawson, who was the officer of the watch of the flagship, a splendid fellow, the very soul of honour (killed afterwards, alas! at Tel-el-Kebir), went to Captain Fitzroy and asked to be excused from giving evidence as he himself was in the flagship's chart house at the time the signal was made. He was offered the choice of giving evidence or being court-martialled himself, and was extremely lucky not to have been tried without mercy.

In those days the newly joined midshipmen learned all their duties from the senior midshipmen. I learned mine largely from Arthur Ewart, one of the smartest and most strict Service midshipmen I ever met. His keenness knew no limits; he was alike good aloft, sailing a boat, or on watch, but he was unfortunately possessed of a fiery temper. One fatal morning the eight o'clock drill had gone badly, the foretop, Ewart's top, had been to blame, and tempers were on edge. After all hands had been called down

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from aloft, Ewart, who had cut his hand rather badly during the drill, stayed a few seconds to put some details shipshape. He was angrily called down and sent for.

"Why did you not clear down from aloft at the order?" was fiercely queried. Ewart's quick temper rose.

"I was not going to leave my mast-head like a —— merchant ship."

Great snakes! There was trouble then!

The great man aimed a smite at Ewart with his telescope, but the latter ducked and the mighty one banged his hand on the bridge rails, which did not improve matters. The offence was too serious: poor Ewart was taken out of his top and not allowed aloft; he was removed from his beloved first cutter, the smartest and best-sailed boat in the Fleet, and given other punishments. I never have known any case where a punishment was so severe. To some midshipmen it would have mattered little, but Ewart's every interest in life was gone and his highly sensitive temperament was terribly bruised. There is no doubt that with boys punishment should vary with their temperament, and we should remember that the feelings of the majority of them are more sensitive and acute than those of older persons.

The punishment dealt out to midshipmen in those days were severe. Six weeks' "watch and watch"—that is, twelve hours out of every twenty-four strict watch, walking up and down the quarter-deck—was not uncommon; but enough of such melancholy subjects!

The outstanding event of my life at this period was

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the purchase with another midshipman from a messmate of a good 12-bore hammer double-barrelled gun. He and I were in opposite watches, so never ashore together; we each paid three pounds ten for the purchase, then with powder and shot we loaded and reloaded some brown cartridge cases till they would load no more; seven times reloading a brown case (the cheapest and most inferior of all makes) was the record. Often in the marshes round Ismid I have had to peel cases that had become wet and swollen down to the thickness of brown paper, in order to get them into the gun. We always carried a ramrod to knock swollen cases out of the gun, and when the brass end came away from the brown case the remainder had to be dug out with a knife. But what glorious afternoons those were! Up to our knees in water, or stepping from tussock to tussock under water, when a false slip meant a splash waist deep, never have I enjoyed myself more, and the day when first I bagged two snipe will never be forgotten. Radcliffe, one of our midshipmen, was my mentor, a keen little sportsman and a good shot. Whenever we could get ashore we waded warily but merrily after the snipe. When my co-shareholder in the gun left to go to the *Bacchante* to accompany the young Princes in their trip round the world, we tossed up for the gun and to my joy I won, paid the balance, and the whole gun was mine.

About this time a much-discussed court martial was held on Captain Lindsay Brine for hazarding his ship. It was in the very early days of fleet manœuvring, and the Captain in question did not come up to Admiral Hornby's high standard of efficiency. He was eventually acquitted by the court. One answer given

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in court by Captain Heneage, a not too willing witness, deserves to be recorded ; it was the greatest knock-out to a cross-examiner that can well be imagined. The question put by the prosecutor, Captain Tyron, was of this nature : " You were on the bridge of your ship, you saw that a collision was imminent, why did you not starboard your helm ? " In the slightly mincing style Heneage had in talking the answer came, slowly and distinctly :

" If I had been . . . where I was not, and I had seen . . . that which I did not see, then it..is.. within..the..le..emits of possibility that I might have done that which I did not do."

This deserves to be classed with the two champion enigmatical answers: that of a negro in court who when asked what he meant by nothing, defined it as " a blind nigger at night in a dark cellar looking for a black cat which was not there " ; the other the schoolboy's definition of salt as " that stuff which makes an egg taste nasty if you don't eat it with it."

The aforesaid Captain Heneage was most particular about his dress. When in China he used to have his white shirts sent to England to be washed and re-consigned to him in airtight cases.

The Fleet had one great excitement while lying off Ismid owing to an earthquake occurring in the middle of the night. The shock woke all hands, and each and all thought that their ship had been torpedoed. The chief point of interest was that in one ship all the men rushed to lower the boats, and in another they went to their fighting stations ; an excellent example of how strict discipline becomes ingrained and proves

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itself automatically in sudden emergencies, whereas slackness and indiscipline produce disorder.

It was a happy day when the Fleet, having been up the Dardanelles for two years, left Ismid, made a circuit as close as it could get to Constantinople, and then left for Malta.

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CHAPTER III

1879–1883

DRILLS, DISCIPLINE, AND DRINK

Eight o'clock drill—A forgetful Captain—The training of officers—Masts and sails—The old-time seamen—Definition of discipline—Cleaning ship as an aid to discipline—The right way to make a ship efficient—Drill aloft—Upper yardmen—The *Monarch's* cock—Monday morning drill—Shortening sail from all possible—Doggies—A tactless doggie—Accidents aloft—Carelessness of officers on deck—Swearing—A half haversine—An epicure—The Bishop's parrot—Decline of swearing in the Navy—Drink—Bad cases among officers—Extent among the men—Heredity—A very sad case—A fatal mistake.

I HAVE mentioned once or twice the eight o'clock drill. In the days of which I write all ships had masts, yards, and sails. Sailing and rigging persisted in spite of the development of steam propulsion, in order to give an alternate means of locomotion in case the engines broke down; for, as well may be imagined, engine failures were by no means uncommon in the days when first they were introduced into the Navy.

This transition stage in the Navy between sail and steam was also at times one of peril, as for instance when an aged Captain, only accustomed to sailing ships, entered a harbour using steam as well as sail-power, furled the sails and dropped the anchor, but on went the ship and parted her cable. He quite thought the devil had got the ship in tow until he was reminded that he had forgotten to stop the engines, which he did just in time to prevent running the ship ashore.

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In fact, the main training of the older officers and men had been in seamanship, which largely, if not solely, consisted in a knowledge of the art of sailing a ship, making and fitting rigging and sails, the replacement of broken spars, ropes, or split sails, and the instant steps that should be taken in case of squalls or other sudden emergencies. Tactics, strategy, and the finer arts of gunnery were but vague dreams of the future. Even navigation—that is, the science of telling at any time the position of the ship at sea—was not practised by the majority of officers, this work being largely left to a special line of navigating officers, the professional descendants of the masters and masters' mates of Nelson's time. The result was that since the major portion of the professional knowledge of the older officers was merely that of handling a ship under sail, masts and sails died a lingering death, and these anachronisms persisted long after they were of any real use as a means of propulsion.

On the other hand, the ship's rigging provided a unique gymnasium. The sailors of those days were like cats; the flexibility with which a man would jump from the rigging on to the deck, the "give" and "spring" as the bare feet landed on the planks, were absolutely cat-like. Likewise aloft "one hand for yourself and one for the country" was a common saying, but more often it was both hands for the work in progress and only feet and elbows for yourself.

Moreover, evolutions and drills were tremendous aids to discipline, and discipline on board ship is the first essential, for on it every other virtue hangs. A ship is a large community in a very small space, every temperament, all classes of character and characteris-

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tics are herded together and of necessity brought into collision. The verb "to discipline" really means to teach an individual to do that which he does not wish to do, and to do the same cheerfully and at once. Discipline is the bending of the individual will to the benefit of the whole.

The first step in disciplining a ship's company is to teach each man to take a pride in his ship and in all that concerns her. Every wise Commander, therefore, on commissioning devotes his energies to getting his ship clean and pleasing to the eye. There are very few naval subjects on which more nonsense has been talked than "cleaning ship." In the first place, a small area like a ship crowded with men must be kept scrupulously clean, on this everyone is agreed; but on the question of decoration and ultra-cleanliness there is a divergence of opinion. With good organisation, a ship can be made and kept ultra-clean—that is, her decks spotless and her metal work and paint work a pleasure to the eye—and yet there should be ample time to devote to her essential gunnery and other exercises. I never knew a "slummy ship" either well disciplined or smart. The greatest sinner in this respect that I ever knew was one flagship in the Mediterranean Squadron; it really gave one heartache to go on board her and remember the glories of the long succession of flagships that had gone before.

When I joined one battleship as Captain, although she was in full commission, she was very close to the absolute limit of slumminess. It took three weeks hard holystoning before we got through the skin of weatherbeaten wood and exposed the real wood of her decks. It was a revelation to see how zealous the

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men became of the name of the ship as soon as she threw off her rags and tatters and appeared in clean raiment.

As soon after commissioning as the ship is clean enough to give promise to the men of what she will eventually become, the time has arrived to encourage all sports, boat pulling and sailing, and all competitive drills. When a real start has been made in all these things, and discipline and love of the ship established, then efficiency in gunnery follows of its own accord, stimulated by pride in the ship's position in the firing records. Several Captains and Commanders I have known have started at the wrong end, and, obsessed by the idea that gunnery efficiency is the one crowning virtue of a man-of-war, have tried to force such efficiency by drill instead of by emulation and pride in the ship, with the result that the commission has been a ghastly failure. The men after visiting other ships would return to their own and look round with disgust instead of with pride. How could such a ship ever become efficient?

In the old days that I am now recalling sail and spar drill gave a better chance of inter-ship emulation than any competition that now exists, since the result of the competition was immediately seen by the whole Fleet.

There were three chief times for drill aloft—on Monday forenoons, at 8 o'clock every morning and at 4 o'clock every afternoon, Sundays excepted, when some drill aloft was indulged in by the whole Fleet. Note that "morning" on board ship begins at 4 a.m. and ends at 8 a.m., then the "forenoon" begins. The time taken by each ship in each drill was scrupulously recorded; the reputation of a ship for smartness

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depended almost entirely on her place in these fleet drills.

Competition was so keen that the temper of officers and men largely depended on the success or otherwise of the drill; a buoyant cheerfulness resulted from success, and subdued mournfulness, not to say moroseness, prevailed if things had gone badly. The men who worked aloft on the upper yards were picked out for their smartness, activity, and pluck, and certain privileges were accorded to them—such as extra leave ashore and being excused routine duties. When they met their opposite numbers in rival ships ashore bragging and recrimination were apt to take place; and trouble in the shape of considerable fights at times ensued. On one Christmas Day the *Monarch*, the rival to the *Alexandra*, and often a successful rival, hoisted a live cock at her masthead. It was with the greatest difficulty that our upper yard men were prevented from boarding the *Monarch* and capturing the offending bird. Black murder and sudden death at the masthead of the *Monarch* would have been without doubt the result of the raid. The Admiral in a caustic signal ordered the removal of the bird.

Monday morning was usually set apart for a "field day" aloft; so that all through Sunday speculation was rife as to what the drill on the morrow would be, and on Sunday evening after dark sundry surreptitious preparations would take place aloft. Care, however, had to be exercised, since if speculation proved faulty and too much was done in a wrong direction dire disaster might follow.

At 9.30 the Flag-Captain would give the signal-mate the drill signal to make to the Fleet.

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Immediately a scurrying midshipman would convey the news to the forepart of the ship. Every telescope of the Fleet was waiting for the balls of the rolled-up flags to appear above the netting, since the cleverest among the signalmen could read the flags even though not unfurled.

Not a man was allowed above the sheer-pole till the signal was hauled down, or dipped and rehoisted, as the case might be, as the executive sign to carry out the order. Then every ship as if by magic broke into life. The rigging swarmed with men scampering aloft; woe to any who slipped, for immediately he was run over by those behind.

The sails on the yards of all three masts were worked together, all had to wait for the mast that was last to be ready. When the work was finished, and the last man down from aloft, the "finishing pendant" was broken to show that that ship had completed the drill.

Some of the times recorded were extraordinary, but the majority of these would convey little to the present generation. One feat, however, may be appreciated even in these days—namely, that of commencing to shorten sail from all possible with "stun' sails" both sides at the first gun of a twenty-one-gun salute, and having every sail furled and all hands down from aloft by the time that the last gun was fired. Even if ten seconds were allowed instead of the usual seven between each gun, the time taken would only be 200 seconds, or three minutes twenty seconds in which to carry out the work.

The upper deck of a ship at such times as these was seemingly a pandemonium, where apparent chaos, but

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in reality the utmost order, reigned, each man knowing from practice where to go and which rope to man.

Both the Commander who conducted the whole drill, but who was particularly concerned with the main mast, and the First Lieutenant who worked the fore mast, had a midshipman each as a messenger, called colloquially his "doggie." Doggies required tact. If, for instance, things had gone wrong forward, and the forepart were delaying the drill and the Commander told his doggie to go forward and tell the First Lieutenant that "the forepart were all adrift again," the wise doggie, while running forward as hard as he could, would appreciate not only that the First Lieutenant knew perfectly well that the forepart was adrift, but also that he held a hand-flag with an ash handle, so he merely made a circuit near the First Lieutenant, said nothing, and returned meekly to his master. I knew a case of one evil-minded doggie who shouted verbatim some such a message to the First Lieutenant, keeping out of range of the hand-flag, and moreover delivered to the Commander an even more uncomplimentary reply. There was black trouble for a short time, but when this cleared away, attention centred on the woeful lack of tact on the part of the doggie, and this young ruffian had reason to remember that it is unwise to cause dissension among the gods.

Accidents of course happened from men losing their hold and falling from aloft. This was generally the result of pure accident; but a careless officer in charge of the drill could make matters very dangerous aloft. The deaths due to men falling from aloft in one ship in the Fleet at that time totalled more than one for every month of the ship's commission,

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which high record was chiefly due to the Commander hurrying the drills without taking due precautions for the safety of the men aloft. The injuries caused by falls from aloft varied to an extraordinary degree; I have known a man fall from the highest mast and merely hurt himself, and another fall six feet and break his neck; much depended on the fall being broken by a sail or rope.

The keenness and excitement of competition was responsible for much swearing when things went wrong. Many a good tale could be told, but when such a yarn is written with the necessary asterisks it loses all its fervour and often the humour of the incident. High-minded officers tried palliatives, such as softening language by the substitution of harmless words; but it is a lamentable fact that the men paid little heed when called "blessed angels" or "spoon-headed cows," but would jump and work like the dickens when treated to more pungent epithets. One man, however, rebelled when called a "half haversine," which is purely a mathematical quantity. He said he didn't mind being called an asterisk asterisk, but "he warn't going to be called no 'arf 'aversine." It was probably the term "half" that offended, apparently he was a thorough-going individual! This, for some reason I cannot define, reminds me of the seaman who was so angry at the greediness of a messmate that he complained of him to the Commander, saying: "'E's a blessed heppicure, 'e is, 'e'd heat hanything."

The mention of swearing in the Navy inevitably brings to mind parrots, as so many stories are current of sailors and their swearing parrots. One told me by an Italian officer is worth recording. It seems that a

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parrot, who had acquired the swearing habit by living in the f'c'sle of a merchant ship, was much envied by a Bishop at Genoa. The owner warned him of the bird's proclivities, but the Bishop maintained that he could cure him if once he had him in his house. So the bird changed hands. Everything the Bishop tried was useless to cure the bird, until at last one day in despair, after a particularly choice sentence, he took the bird out of his cage, held him by the wings and swung him at the full length of his arm for several minutes and then put him back on his perch. The bird seemed dazed for a second or two, then cocked his head on one side, eyed the Bishop, and said: "There's the —— of a —— sea running again to-day, mate."

A vast change for the better has come over the Navy of late years in this respect, and now oaths are rarely used by officers. It is true that the same rush, hurry, and excitement and the necessity for hailing aloft no longer exist, but even if these occasions were still with us, the tone of the modern Navy would revolt against language such as used to ring over Malta harbour on a Monday morning in the early eighties of last century.

Looking back on the life on board the *Alexandra*, the smartest ship of her day, the improvement in sobriety in forty years is most marked. Drink was a great curse from which the various ranks of officers were by no means free, for the old drinking habits of the Georges, although on the wane, had by then not died out. Even in so strict a ship as the *Alexandra* during her first year of commission, one of the senior members of the gunroom—that is, the junior officers' mess—was almost invariably turned into his hammock

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at night by the midshipmen drunk, yet he escaped detection.

Even in the *Britannia*, the training ship for naval cadets, one of the lieutenants not infrequently could barely read prayers in the evening, owing to being "half-seas over." I think this exhibition produced a very wholesome effect on us youngsters and perhaps more than anything else gave us a horror of drink.

Among the seamen drunkenness was very prevalent. Leave was rarely given, with the result that the men's money accumulated and the combination of opulence and rareness of opportunity resulted in debauch. I have at times brought off ninety liberty men in the ship's launch at least seventy-five per cent. of whom were in various stages of intoxication. The varying effect of drink on different men is quite extraordinary; some sleep like logs, others walk quite well but cannot speak; some, on the other hand, can talk quite rationally but their legs refuse to carry them; some are lamb-like, others grossly quarrelsome. One excellent cook we had always advertised his inebriety by hiring the largest available boat with the greatest possible number of rowers to bring him off in state to the ship.

Drink is either a habit or a disease. If a habit it can be and often is cured; if a disease it is incurable and breaks out again, like cancer. I knew one case of two brothers, both officers, with whom drink was hereditary. After the younger had got into bad trouble from this curse the elder went on half-pay, looked after his brother, tried his best to cure him and in the end did him much good, so that he died a respectable member of the community. One would have thought that the example of the younger would have

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made the elder shun drink for ever, but this was not the case; drink overtook him also, he too had to leave the Navy, and died from the curse that heredity had handed down.

The confusion in the brain produced by intoxication is at times peculiar. In one case I knew of, an officer of the watch had imbibed too freely, but carried clearly in his mind the fact that it was essential that he should be on the alert when the Captain came out of his cabin on to the upper deck. Our muddled friend argued to himself that if he lay down outside the cabin door he was bound to be aware of the Captain's advent. This he did, and of course was trodden on; he certainly awoke, but the subsequent results were disastrous to his advancement in the Navy.

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CHAPTER IV

1879–1883

H.M.S. "ALEXANDRA" AND H.M.S. "NORTHUMBERLAND"

A visit to the Levant—Midshipmen's leave—A wandering Jew—Shooting at Port Sigri—Port Iero—A near shave—A visit to Uskub—A night alarm—An adventure at Salonika—Cyprus—*Punch* on a mission—Comparison of Cyprus and Crete—Lord Beaconsfield and the Levant—A young officer's escapade—Naval cavalry—*Alexandra* second commission—The swell of the ocean—Bully Darwin—A polite snub—Chummy ships—Parting brass rags—A practical joke—Bruin—A serious mistake—Death of Bruin—A sea mystery—Ships in mourning.

In the late spring of 1879 the Mediterranean Fleet left Malta for a cruise in the Levant, visiting the Greek Islands, Cyprus, and the coast of Asia Minor. Partridge shooting starts early in those warm climates, so we were able to get shooting at most of the places at which we called. At Sigri, in Mitylene, we had a capital time whenever we could get ashore; but obtaining leave was not always an easy matter. In the first place the authorities held the theory that midshipmen should only be allowed ashore once a week, a most foolish idea. I have never yet heard any sensible reason why boys should be wilfully deprived of exercise. The midshipmen's leave book had to be signed by the Commander, First Lieutenant, Naval Instructor, Gunnery Lieutenant, and the Torpedo Lieutenant, a formidable gauntlet to run. The chance of a second visit to the shore in the same week depended of course on the state of the temper of the Commander; it became, there-

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fore, an art among midshipmen to squeeze the extra turn. Following a good day's drill and after dinner were the most propitious times to appear with the leave book; but even then not infrequently you would be sent for your watch bill and the latest alterations in the stationing of the men scrutinised. Then on the bad days would come the fatal, "Little boy" (he called all midshipmen little boys) "John Jones has been moved into the foretop at least a week ago; you cannot have leave." We believed that John Jones was a sort of wandering Jew who was kept dodging about from one section of the watch bill to another on purpose to jamb the midshipmen's leave.

But when we did get ashore

> **"What glorious days they were,**
> **It almost seemed like the dream of a dream, that life could have been so fair."**

On a Saturday morning when either Radcliffe or I had the middle watch one of us would call the other at 3.45 a.m. and have cocoa ready. The watch keeper had already surreptitiously put on his shooting clothes under his uniform coat so as to lose as little time as possible. The quartermaster then turned out two sleepy skiff boys and at 4.15 off we went for a day's shooting. Just as day was breaking the boat would ground on the beach; I can now hear that sound and the lap of the waves as we jumped over the side and got ashore if possible with dry boots. Then a walk for half an hour or so till we reached the higher ground where on the bare hill-sides, mottled with rocky patches, the red-legs loved to scratch and lie in the shade out of the heat of the sun. About noon we would make for a Turkish farm-house, give the Turk a few piastres

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for which he in turn supplied us with water, figs, and grapes. About 1.30 we would start again, making our way back to the landing-place about 6.30. Lucky we were if we got four brace of birds between us, but the amount of the bag was nothing compared to the excitement of the day.

The natives were as a whole most friendly, but while at Sigri one of the younger officers was assaulted by a Turk. The Turk was caught and given five years' imprisonment; but when the Fleet left, the Governor found it too much trouble and expense to feed him, so he was let out, only to be hurriedly rearrested when the Fleet returned some weeks after. A good example of Turkish rule!

Port Iero was another harbour that we visited in the same island; the entrance was long with two sharp turns and a shoal in the middle. It had not been thoroughly surveyed, nevertheless the Admiral took the Fleet in. While coming out the *Alexandra* touched the shoal. As the ship checked and heeled over Captain Fitzroy ordered: "Full speed astern"; the midshipman by mistake put the telegraph to full speed ahead, Fitzroy saw the mistake and merely said, "Oh well, we will go over it, then," and so we did with only very slight damage to one propeller.

Salonika we also visited, and here I had a very pleasant trip up-country to Uskub. An old friend, Captain W. H. Hall, who afterwards started the Intelligence Department at the Admiralty, then in command of the *Flamingo*, took me with him. Altogether we were a party of some twelve or fourteen of all ranks and ages; the head of the railway service, who was an Englishman, acted as cicerone. Things inland were

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fairly quiet, but two days before our arrival at one of the places we visited the local ruffians had sent to the governor the heads of twelve Christians. What the exact cause of this little attention was I do not remember, but the governor was somewhat annoyed and uneasy about the questions that might be asked by the Sultan.

At Uskub we slept in an inn ; some of us in rooms, some, myself included, in the passage ; this passage ended in an open doorway with a ladder down into the street. We all had revolvers, as the country, although nominally quiet, was always in rather a wild state. In the middle of the night I awoke and felt something feeling my face. Gripping my revolver, I made a grab at the offender, fully believing I had a brigand to deal with ; a " skwark," however, revealed it to be only a cat, and much relieved I went to sleep again. I would without doubt have prayed the Scotch woman's prayer had I then known it: " From witches and wizards, from warlocks and willycoos and all them things that go boompin the nicht, good Lord deliver us."

At Uskub a concentration of some thirty thousand or so troops was taking place as trouble on the frontier was anticipated. Towards sunset we climbed a hill to watch them assemble for evening prayer—a fine sight, the setting sun lighting up the ranks of thousands of bowing and prostrating true believers.

One other incident I remember at Salonika has been fixed in my mind chiefly on account of the distance I travelled in some four minutes. Another midshipman and I had strolled to the limits of the town, and then, while wending our way towards the citadel, we came across four Turkish soldiers excited

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by drink. One took hold of my stick and wrenched it out of my hand; I tried to get it back, when I saw one of the others begin to draw his bayonet. The speed I moved at with that Turk behind me was a record! The other midshipman had had a good start and was a hundred yards in front; luckily we were too close to the town for the chase to continue for long.

The Fleet visited Cyprus so that the Admiral could sample and report on its anchorages. The Berlin Conference had just handed over the island to Great Britain. Lord Beaconsfield was obsessed with the idea that Asia Minor and Palestine would be the future battle-fields of the European countries; he therefore bargained for England to have Cyprus as a protectorate. Before the Conference met at Berlin the Cabinet had had to decide whether to ask for Cyprus or Crete. To settle the question the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. W. H. Smith, and the Minister for War, Lord Stanley, visited the two islands. *Punch* had an amusing verse on their mission which ran somewhat as follows:

> "The chief of the Army and head of the Fleet
> Went out on a mission to Cyprus and Crete.
> The natives received them with shouts and hurrahs,
> Hailed one of them Neptune, the other one Mars.
> They raised up an altar to Stanley forthwith,
> But they raised up a bookstall to W. H. Smith."

Crete was incomparably the better naval base, having a first-class harbour at Suda Bay, whereas the anchorages off the coast of Cyprus, of Larnaca, Limasol, and Famagousta, were open to the sea. The Island of Crete, however, suffered from two disadvantages. Firstly, it was very mountainous, so much so, that the

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War Office estimated that it would take an Army Corps to subdue any rising that might take place among the natives. Secondly, it was farther from Palestine, which was an important objection from Lord Beaconsfield's point of view. Cyprus was therefore chosen in preference to Crete.

Cyprus was a disappointing island for sport. The chief thing I remember in connection with the island was the exciting exploit of a young and irresponsible accountant officer. This young man while wandering one day about the country came across a rather nice-looking Turkish house and garden. Never having seen the inside of either, and totally unmindful of the religious care with which strangers are excluded from the ladies' quarters, he proceeded to explore the house, with the result that he was forcibly ejected from the precincts with blows by the Turks and his myrmidons. This treatment rankled sorely in the youngster's mind, and he determined to have revenge. General leave was about to be given to the men, and this seemed to the youth to be a fitting opportunity for organising a raid in force on his enemy the Turk. He therefore got together some of the younger seamen who were quite as hare-brained as he was, mounted them on donkeys and mules and led them across country to attack the house of the Turk. Their progress was not rapid and there were many casualties on the way. Sailors, by reason of their forced, and often prolonged, absence from land, are not usually expert riders, and when such lack of skill is associated with frequent libations of country wine in hot weather, the results are apt to be both ludicrous and disastrous. Some fell off their steeds, some were backed into prickly pear

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hedges, and some had animals that absolutely refused to budge. To those who know sailors, donkeys, mules, and the East, the scene can well be imagined. A sweltering hot day with a glorious blue sky, and the country dazzling white, the sailors with straw hats and white clothing bumping along with trousers rucked up to their knees, jobbing at the mouths of their miscellaneous steeds, probably lamenting like Hood's unfortunate seaman:

> "My eyes how she did pitch!
> And wouldn't keep her own to go in no line,
> Tho' I kept bowsing, bowsing at the bowline,
> But always making leeway to the ditch,
> And yaw'd her head about all sorts of ways,
> The devil sink the Craft.
> And wasn't she tremendous slack in stays!"

A few, however, came up to the scratch at the finish, and I believe punishment was awarded to the Turk to the accompaniment of shrieks from the ladies of the harem.

Shortly afterwards the Turk complained of the outrage and then the real trouble began which ended in a court martial. The accused wrote an elaborate defence which was duly read in court and ended somewhat as follows:

"The most important lesson to be learned from the whole incident is the incapacity of seamen to undertake the duties of light cavalry."

After returning to Malta the *Alexandra* paid off. Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour relieved Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, Lord Walter Kerr came as Flag Captain and Sacheveral Darwin as Commander.

Admiral Seymour, afterwards Lord Alcester, was known by the sobriquet of "The Swell of the Ocean,"

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a man who had held many commands, a born diplomatist greatly assisted in this capacity by having on board a really good French cook. Lord Walter Kerr kept an especially fatherly eye on the midshipmen; and Darwin, called by the men, "Bully Darwin," not the slightest bit of a bully, but with the voice and physique of a bull, was one of the most popular officers I ever knew. I served with him on four occasions and on each occasion I learnt to like him better. The men all loved him, although his language at times would almost blister the paint. One morning, after we had been in commission some months, he slipped coming down a ladder, and broke his knee-cap, which necessitated his going to hospital. Christmas Day came, and in the afternoon his two boy messengers were sent by the crew up to the hospital with a basket containing something from each of the men's messes to show that he had not been forgotten. A rare mark of affection from a crew.

Malta was very popular with the Fleet. The older officers had plenty of dancing and entertainments, wives were able to come out and meet their husbands, the men could get leave, and the midshipmen could amuse themselves with fives, rackets, football, and cricket. The cruises under the new Admiral were political and social rather than sporting, the coasts of Italy, Sicily, and the Riviera being generally selected.

From Civita Vecchia a considerable contingent of Roman Catholics from the Fleet visited the Vatican and received the Papal blessing. This reminds me of the time when, several years later, the German Emperor visited the Pope. A great flutter was caused by this

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visit; the political results, however, were not great, but it was the occasion of a most courteously delivered snub. The audience between the Pope and the Emperor was arranged to be an entirely personal one. After the Emperor had entered the audience room, one of his entourage tried to push in past the suave Cardinal who kept the door, but was reminded by him that the audience was a private one and therefore he could not enter. "Do you not know who I am?" said the irate personage. "I am the Marshal Von ——." The Cardinal bowed courteously and said, "Sir, that may explain, but it does not excuse your conduct."

In 1881 there was some slight trouble between the Great Powers and Montenegro, which led to a combined International Fleet assembling at Ragusa and Cattaro on the Dalmatian coast, under our Admiral, to bring pressure on this recalcitrant state. The Russians sent a frigate with specially fine crew, every man being over six feet in height; they and the Austrians were the greatest favourites with the crews of the English ships.

A marked characteristic of life at sea is a selective instinct which leads fleets and ships to become either friends or enemies. Every ship in a squadron has a "chummy ship." What led to that particular ship being chosen by another as a chum is often a mystery; generally it is the outcome of some trivial incident long forgotten. Sometimes the affinity is hereditary and handed on from one commission to another. While on leave the men often fraternise with the crew of their chummy ship only, fight their battles, exchange cap ribbons, and in many ways exhibit signs of cordial friendship. On the other hand, both nationalities and

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ships have antipathies. I have known times when it was not safe to give general leave on the same days to the men of two ships whose rivalry had developed into hate, and the same applies to nationalities when combined fleets are assembled. One case occurred at the Piraeus when our men chummed with the crew of another nationality and fought a great fight on their behalf, and so great was the enmity that after this each nationality in turn had its own day for giving leave.

Nearly every seaman has his chum, for whom he will do anything, while for others he will do little or nothing, unless he is paid. They generally work together and clean the same brass work, sharing the cleaning materials; when they quarrel they divide the cleaning rags and no longer share the same bag; hence the term "parting brass rags" denotes a breach of friendship that is past healing.

We had on board an officer, a native of a foreign country, who we will call Ali Baba, and whose knowledge of things nautical was small. His appointment was political rather than with a view to his taking up in the future a serious naval career. On several occasions he was noticed to be rather ostentatiously measuring the outside of one of the Whitehead torpedoes, and shortly afterwards he announced that he had discovered the secret that was hidden in its interior. We all knew that there was a chamber hidden inside these torpedoes that held secret mechanism; we also believed that the mechanism caused the torpedoes to keep at a fixed distance below the surface of the water during its run, and that it was this invention that was the foundation of Mr. Whitehead's success in

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life. Only two persons in the ship knew the solution of the mystery.

Now our Gunnery and Torpedo Lieutenants, knowing full well that it was far above the brain of Ali Baba to divine so recondite a secret, determined to "pull his leg." They "wangled" a printed form ordering a court martial out of the Admiral's office and duly filled it in, ordering such a court to assemble to try Ali Baba "For conduct to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline, in that he, the said Ali Baba, had discovered the secret of the Whitehead torpedo." This was shown to Ali Baba, who was much perturbed, and here for a day or two the matter ended. Then came a bombshell in the shape of a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief from the Admiralty inquiring why Ali Baba was going to be tried by court martial. In trepidation and fear, Ali Baba had wired to an influential friend in his native country, that friend had gone to the Premier, who had wired to the Minister in London, who had gone to the Foreign Office, who had moved the Admiralty to explain the nature of Ali Baba's offence, and therefore naturally the latter wired to the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. High and Mighty Big Wigs all were moved to move someone else on account of a practical joke of two young lieutenants. Now Sir Beauchamp Seymour, although essentially of a kindly nature, did not appreciate having his name taken and signed in vain, especially as the tale would inevitably filter through to the London clubs; moreover, the matter had to be explained backwards again through all the Big Wigs. So not unnaturally threats of a real court martial rolled ominously from the after-cabin. But happily the tact and influence of his Flag Lieutenant

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succeeded in staving off the worst, and a reprimand took the place of a court martial.

Our chief pet on board the *Alexandra* was a brown bear called Bruin, who was the friend of every midshipman. Every evening strict discipline nodded for an hour during which time games and skylarking were allowed on the quarter-deck; great wrestles then took place between us boys and Bruin. He was always gentle—that is to say, gentle for a bear! But if he got the better of the struggle he was not above tearing our nether garments. One joke that he thoroughly enjoyed was to go overboard on a calm day in harbour and swim to a neighbouring ship. He would approach a boat lying at the boom with its boat keeper sitting in the stern, a somewhat somnolent occupation, and put one paw on the gunwale and the other on the shoulder of the man, whose jump into activity was usually violent enough to risk upsetting the boat. Bruin would then move on to some other ship.

The first time that we lay in Malta harbour after his arrival on board, he swam ashore and walked down Strada Reale. The natives fled in terror, and a policeman, white in the face and groggy at the knees, came on board and implored us to "send ashore, sir, to fetch it off de horse, sir." One day he saw a rather stout man with a fussy gait walking along the quarter-deck; with one jump he had hold of the tails of the officer's frock coat. Unfortunately his victim was the Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, a man by no means accustomed to having his coat tails torn before the eyes of the whole ship's company, and so Bruin made an enemy in high quarters.

His end was a sad one. At sea he generally slept

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in a boat that was turned in-board, so that one of its sides overhung the ship and the other had a sheer drop into the water. He was rather blind in one eye owing to a chance encounter with a whitewash brush. One evening in climbing out he mistook the proper side of the boat and dropped overboard. There was not a midshipman in the ship who would not have jumped overboard after him had he thought the Fleet would not have been stopped to pick him up; but the Fleet was considered to be too great and mighty a concern to be stopped for a mere bear, and so he was left to his fate.

One day, when some distance from Palermo, we sighted a ship with all plain sail set, but having that dishevelled look aloft that betokens trouble. One ship of the Fleet was told to board her; so a boat was sent alongside. The officer made a thorough search, but found nothing living on board except a cat; the cabin was in a normal state and in it was a sewing machine standing on the table, which showed that the ship had not been deserted in bad weather. She was towed into Palermo, where we heard afterwards that the crew had landed, but had left hurriedly when their ship arrived, and had moved on to Naples, where they spread the report that they had been turned out of their ship by the crew of a British man-of-war! That is all I ever heard of the matter. No explanation of the desertion was forthcoming, nor is it easy to invent one, so I hope that the story may provide a lay figure for some novelist to clothe with weavings from the loom of his ingenious imagination.

Sailors in their imagination love to endow their ships with human emotions; hence to them the state aloft of a sailing ship is interpreted as betokening her

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feelings. A smart look, when every rope is taut, each mast well stayed, and every yard square, denotes smartness, contentment, and discipline; but carelessness and indiscipline are indicated when a single rope is seen to be slack or a yard out of the square.

A deserted ship on the ocean is a miserable and mournful sight; everything is wrong to the seaman's eye. Small spars carried away, sails split and torn to rags, and yards swinging aimlessly, all denote dejection and desertion. In the old days when a Captain died, his ship was made to look miserable until after the funeral; with masts and yards nohow, ropes eased up, and boats hanging out of the square at the davits, she mourned visibly to all beholders.

In ships hailing from Roman Catholic countries a sailing ship will, on Good Friday, cock-a-bill her yards, topping them to port on one mast and to starboard on the other, so that when viewed from ahead they appear as a succession of crosses.

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CHAPTER V

MIDSHIPMEN

The value of midshipmen on board—Boat work—Effect of the training squadron commissioning—School—A gunpowder plot—Dear little midshipmen—A home-sick midshipman—The fate of the Major—Yielding to temptation—Johnson—The butt of the Midshipman—Squashed flat—A wise Lieutenant—Punishment—Boswell and his dog—Fabricated orders—How they broke out of the ship—A promising youngster—An awkward predicament—An essay on woman—Examinations.

A REALLY efficient midshipman was, in the old days, a great asset to the commander of a ship. Aloft he was most useful in seeing orders promptly obeyed, and in directing at close quarters work which was being supervised by officers on deck. At his gun quarters or in charge of working parties he was in closer touch with the men than officers of higher rank could be ; and still further, a good senior midshipman had unique opportunities of teaching those junior to himself, and fashioning them into useful and efficient officers. Perhaps taking charge of a boat and its crew was of all duties the most trying to the younger midshipmen.

I have mentioned already that at the time I was a midshipman drink was the curse of the Navy. It was the business of the midshipman of a boat to bring his crew back to the ship sober. This was by no means easy in foreign ports with the jetties crowded with natives, some of whom were there solely for the purpose of selling skins full of infernal decoctions to the sailors.

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As a rule if a boat's crew liked its officer they would play the game, but this was not always the case. If they disliked their officer, sooner or later they would obtain the coveted drink surreptitiously. The charge of a boat's crew therefore was an excellent education in handling men. If a midshipman took a pride in his boat, wangled brass rubbing-strakes, tillers, crutches, and cleats for her, and expended his rum in obtaining an extra allowance of white paint, and got his crew to take a pride in their boat; and if when the sailing regatta came they were well in at the finish, then an "esprit de batteau" was created and the men took care not to disgrace her.

Midshipmen, again, were the media for disseminating rivalry through the ship. The first cutter strove to cut out and be smarter than the second cutter. The starboard upper battery strove to have their guns more polished and the steelwork better burnished than the port battery, the foretop to beat the maintop at drill, and so on. The stimulating microbes in this rivalry were the midshipmen, and frequently quite a considerable portion of their microscopic pay was spent in beautifying those particular portions of the ship that came under their control. A good midshipman knew he was a good midshipman and the officers of the ship knew it too, and woe betide any youngster who was a slacker who came to serve under him in the ship.

One of the most severe blows struck at the efficiency of young officers was the commissioning in 1882 of the Training Squadron. This detached squadron of four sailing ships cruised in foreign parts almost always under sail, with a view to instructing young officers

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and seamen in sailing-ship lore. From this point of view it was excellent, but incidentally all the senior midshipmen were sent to the Training Squadron and taken out of the other ships in the Navy; hence the juniors in all the ships were left with no one to instruct them and bring them up. The standard of efficiency of the midshipmen as a whole fell at once and never recovered till the Training Squadron was abolished and the old conditions, of seniors and juniors being mixed in the ships, was reverted to.

In the old days it always was a case of "Pull devil, pull baker," between the Commander and the Naval Instructor. The Commander wanted the midshipmen to help in their various duties, and the Naval Instructor wanted to cram them with elementary mathematics. The inclination of the midshipmen lay with deck work. This tug-of-war was of course due to the anomaly of sending midshipmen to sea at an early age to learn their seagoing work and at the same time trying to stuff them with school work.

However, it somehow worked out all right. Out of my four years as a midshipman I was fifteen months without any Naval Instructor and six months with one who was absolutely useless, but I do not think I suffered one whit compared with those who had the advantage of an Instructor all the time they were at sea. I used to work a good deal at mathematics in my night watches and at other times. The fact is that "spoon feeding" helps the average chick, but not the greedy ones who are determined to thrive.

One day, while returning in my boat to the

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Alexandra, I saw midshipmen dotted about aloft, at each of the mastheads and yard-arms sat potential Nelsons. "Trouble has been to the fore," thought I, and the diagnosis was correct. What had happened was that at school some of the midshipmen, who loved not the Chaplain and Naval Instructor, had put a handful of gunpowder under a manuscript book, laid a train along the table, and then the possessor of the book had asked assistance from the Chaplain, who was very short sighted. As His Reverence burrowed his spectacled nose down into the book the train was ignited, "Poof" went the powder, and the book jumped into his face and broke his spectacles. For a moment the smell of sulphur, the flame, and the acrid smoke must have made him think without doubt that his last moments on earth had passed away, and that he was at the entrance to the infernal regions.

Beware of the younger brand of midshipmen unless you have been one yourself, and especially beware of the innocent curly-headed variety of that species, those usually characterised by ladies as the "dear little midshipmen"; they are as full of devilry as an egg is full of meat.

When I was a Lieutenant in the Mediterranean I received a letter from a sister, saying she had met such a dear little midshipman who was just starting life at sea and leaving for a ship on that station. She asked me to do anything that I could for him, as he was sure to be very home-sick in his new surroundings. I took the first opportunity of hunting up this cherub and eventually one evening ran him to earth in a haunt favoured by midshipmen. There I found him smoking

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a churchwarden pipe with a good-sized glass of gin-and-water in front of him, joining in the choruses of some ditties which lent themselves to supreme vocal effort. I was able to write back and say that I had reason to believe that " The Angel " was gradually getting over his home-sickness.

It is impossible to forecast what one of these young limbs of Satan will not do in the presence of sudden temptation. I knew one who was a keen and good boat sailer who one day, to the astonishment of us all, rammed the accommodation ladder platform and broke in the bows of the boat that he was sailing. He said it was an accident, and got soundly punished. The real tale was not public property for some time after. The truth was that we had a Major of Marines who was cordially disliked by the midshipmen. He posed as a great seaman and boat sailer. When in a boat that was being sailed by a midshipman, he would lean back with an eyeglass in his eye and say : " Very well thice," " No higher," " Luff you may," " Mind your weather helm," and such-like remarks till the youth longed to unship the tiller and belt him over the head with it. On the day in question the Major had been to inspect the Marine detachment on board a neighbouring ship in full war paint—spiked helmet, sword, spurs, sash and all. While sailing back he was particularly offensive in his nautical advice ; so, as the boat neared the ship the midshipman said quietly to the crew, " Prepare to ram," at which hint they held on to their thwarts like grim death. There was a good stiff sailing breeze ; the boat crashed and the Major was shot forward into the bow, and never realised what was happening or had happened, until he had been picked up out of the

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bow of the boat an intricate puzzle of spurs, sword, and sash, his helmet smashed and both eyes blackened. Never again did he tender advice to a midshipman on boat sailing.

Another young demon had been away in a gig watching over the ship's company while they bathed, to see that none of them drowned themselves. As he was coming towards the after gangway, where the officers were bathing, he spied the back of the head of the Chaplain and Naval Instructor, the hero of the gunpowder plot previously recorded. It was too great a temptation to resist: he steered straight for the large bald patch showing above water, thinking to push His Reverence under, and give him a good ducking as the boat passed over him. He succeeded only too well, for the forefoot of the boat nearly broke the poor man's skull, and gave him a nasty cut. The midshipmen close by kept him afloat and got him safely on board, otherwise this sudden yield to temptation might have had a tragic ending.

In one ship in which I served as a midshipman we had a Chaplain who also was our Naval Instructor. His duties were to teach us elementary mathematics and the theory of navigation. As a Chaplain he was above reproach, but it must indeed have been a very whimsical fate that ordained that he should be chosen to go to sea and be placed in a position of authority over midshipmen. No man, I should think, ever existed who in mental psychology was less capable of exercising authority. Nervous in temperament, slow-witted, and gullible to the last degree, this poor martyr daily carried a cross made leaden by his

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pupils, instead of doing what a sensible man would have done and making the midshipmen carry the cross for him.

In a previous ship he had already become the butt of the midshipmen. One evening at sea when all was quiet and our friend, whom we will disguise under the name of Johnson, for I never knew a Naval Instructor at sea of that name, was walking the quarter-deck, two young fiends each took a bucket of water and washed out his cabin, soaking the bed through and through. Another midshipman who could prove an alibi then rushed up to Johnson and said: "Mr. Johnson, sir! A shark is in your cabin." Johnson ran below and examined the mess, saying: "I don't see the shark, but he certainly has made the place very wet. I suppose he went out again through the port-hole."

On another occasion in the middle of the night two midshipmen went to his cabin and woke him up. They were invisible in the dark and shouted as loud as prudence permitted, "Mr. Johnson, Mr. Johnson, the ship is sinking." "Oh, wh-wh-what-ee-ever is the ma-matter?" came from Johnson's trembling lips. "Nothing, you old silly," said the boys and made good their escape. One of them in his haste left a slipper behind. With such a clue the veriest idiot would have turned it over to the Commander, who in a very short time would have discovered the offender and had him crucified. No! Johnson determined to keep the slipper until he found out to whom it belonged by the owner claiming it. This in fact did happen, but not in the way Johnson anticipated. One day one of the delinquents went to him and said: "Mr. Johnson,

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I hear you have one of my slippers in your cabin. You have no right to steal my things." "I did not steal your slipper," said Johnson. "Then what is it doing in your cabin? You knew it did not belong to you, and in keeping it you as good as stole it. I did think chaplains were above stealing midshipmen's things." "Oh! I am so sorry, Mr. ——. I am sure you don't think really that I meant to steal your slipper," and away went the victor with his spoil, and a good story, which of course circulated through the ship.

Well, this poor man was destined to tumble across a huge thorn in the shape of one of our midshipmen, who I will call Boswell. He simply crushed and kneaded poor Johnson by treating him with utter contempt. Boswell always addressed Johnson as "Johnson," never calling him "Mr. Johnson," and a frequent dialogue of this nature occurred. *Boswell:* "Johnson, come and show me how to do this." *Johnson:* "Mr. Boswell, my name is Mr. Johnson, not Johnson." *Boswell:* "Oh, Johnson, never mind that, Johnson is good enough for me," and here the conversation would lapse. I remember well how one day Boswell during school-time uttered a loud "Damn." "Mr. Boswell," said Johnson in a most reproving voice, "you said 'Damn.'" Then Boswell rose up in all the wrath of offended innocence and said: "Johnson, you have accused me of using bad language. I have never been so insulted in all my life—I shall report your conduct to the Commander," and he walked towards the door. "Oh, Mr. Boswell," said Johnson, cringing like Uriah Heep, "I didn't mean to say that you said 'Damn,' I only meant that I thought you said

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'Damn.'" "Well, Johnson, since you apologise I let you off this time," said Boswell and resumed his seat. You can imagine how much work was done after that.

One day the Captain came into the fore-cabin where we were at school and found Johnson sprawling on the floor under the table, which had collapsed on him, and the midshipmen sitting on the top of the table. He remarked, "Mr. Johnson, I think you have done enough school for to-day." Punishment of the midshipmen followed of course. How Johnson came to be in such a position puzzled the Captain, but the solution was a simple one. At sea one of the favourite games of the midshipmen was to unship the legs of the table from their sockets in the deck and push the table about, pretending that the ship was rolling, and then say they felt too sea-sick to go on with school. Johnson after examining the clinometer fixed on the bulk-head, which instrument recorded the rolling of the ship, would come to the conclusion that the ship had suddenly stopped rolling. He would then go down on his hands and knees and place each leg in turn into its socket. The youngsters round the table of course lifted out each leg in succession again, and so the game went on. The table was a collapsible one, and on this occasion the hooks which kept the legs distended came out and the whole collapsed on His Reverence. Of course the midshipmen then clambered on top, pretending to help him out, till the noise attracted the Captain and justice was meted out to the offenders.

When particularly irritated Boswell would say, "Johnson, is it true you were plucked three times for

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Naval Instructor and that they pushed you through at last ?" "Never you mind about that, Mr. Boswell, go on with your work." But the sting lay in the fact that it was perfectly true. I could tell many another tale of Johnson and his gullibility. The last time I saw him was some years after when he and I were in different ships ; our ships happened to meet in harbour and I went on board to see him. He was in his cabin and we had a chat. In the middle of it in came two midshipmen head over heels through the curtain of his door, nearly knocking him down. "What do you want ?" said Johnson. "We only thought you would like to see us," said one of the youngsters, and then both bolted. "I see it is much the same as ever," I said. "Yes," moaned Johnson, "they are full of spirits." Fancy, twenty-five years of such a life !

A relative of mine who many years ago was a lieutenant in the Navy and remarkably tall, being one or two inches over six feet, found he could not stretch himself out in his bunk, the cabin being narrow. The carpenter suggested that he should cut a hole in the bulk-head and box in the other side, thus giving extra length to his bunk. The only objection was that next door happened to be the midshipmen's berth. My relative always maintained that he would sooner have put up with any discomfort than trust his feet in the gunroom, where the midshipmen lived, if his eyes did not accompany them ; he knew midshipmen too well.

Rough justice used to be meted out in the gunroom. In one gunroom mess in which I lived one young officer committed the unpardonable sin of

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talking disparagingly of a lady. We lashed him up in his hammock and scratched a broad arrow on his nose, which obliged him for many days to remain on board to avoid anxious inquiries by friends ashore, who knew the story, how he had managed to hurt the organ in question.

My friend Boswell was an extraordinarily cool young rascal. One day when the ship was anchored off the coast of Greece he went ashore and bought a dog for a penny. You can picture the brute! He brought it on board and tied it up in the Captain's fore-cabin, hoping that it would escape detection in the dark. The Captain, however, came on board late in the evening with his spaniel, and no sooner opened his fore-cabin door than he found himself tripped up and, in a sitting-down position, witnessing a dog fight in the dark. The dog was traced to Boswell, who was hauled up before the Captain. The latter naturally, with indignation, wanted to know, in the name of discipline and every other canon of the Service, what he meant by tying up the dog in his cabin. Boswell said, "Well, sir, I had nowhere else to put it, so I put it in there out of the way." Tableau.

Rarely did midshipmen try to get the better of the Commander or Captain; they knew too much. Naval Instructors had only been to a public school and probably college, and therefore were comparatively innocent. The Naval Instructor of a neighbouring ship one day said to the Commander: "I wish you would not always send for the midshipmen during school." "I never have sent for the young beggars," said the Commander. "Well," said the other, "every day a quarter of an hour after school has started I have been

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called to the voice pipe and given a message that the Commander wanted all the midshipmen on deck at once." It turned out that this message was daily fabricated by one of the boys; the youngsters then all packed up their books under the pretence of obeying the summons and spent the forenoon on their backs in the gunroom.

Once only have I known midshipmen to score off their Captain. The officer in question had some "Queen's hard bargains" in the way of midshipmen: there was trouble ashore and several were sentenced to have their leave stopped. Strict orders were given that they were not to leave the ship, but he knew from rumours that they still managed to get ashore. After the ship paid off, he asked one if it was true and how they managed it. He then learned to his surprise that every evening when he went ashore after dark all the crew of his galley, except two men on the after thwarts, were midshipmen with sailors' clothes slipped on over their plain clothes. While he was ashore so were the boys, who took good care to be in the boat again in time to pull him back to the ship.

For calm cheek and assurance the tale of an old friend of mine easily bears off the palm. He was the best of good fellows and first-rate company, and had sufficient independence of character for half a dozen ordinary mortals. When serving on a distant station he was taken ill and was left at a small base when the Fleet sailed. While still ashore the date on which he should pass for sub-lieutenant arrived. In order that a boy should not lose seniority by failing to pass his seamanship examination on the proper date, owing to

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circumstances preventing the assembly of a properly constituted Board, an officer senior to the candidate was empowered by the regulations to examine him provisionally. My friend therefore persuaded the Boatswain in charge of the dockyard, the only other executive officer present, to examine and pass him. When the examination ended and his certificate was signed, he informed the Boatswain that, being a Sub-Lieutenant, he had become the Senior Naval Officer of the port and proceeded to take over the duties. Getting tired of the place, he ordered his own passage to England and in due course arrived at the Admiralty with a fairly heavy bill for the numerous comforts to which he considered he was entitled during his passage on board the ocean liner and on the train. The Admiralty officials were staggered; such independence of action was unknown or unthought of, and an interrogation something like the following ensued:

Q. What are you doing here?

A. I have come home to go to Greenwich for the Sub-Lieutenant's course.

Q. Who sent you home?

A. I ordered myself home.

Q. What right had you to do so?

A. I was the senior officer present.

Q. But how about the Boatswain?

A. He had passed me provisionally and therefore I was his senior.

Q. But you had no commission as Sub-Lieutenant and he had his warrant.

A. As senior officer present I signed my own commission.

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Then the Admiralty official put what seemed to him an unanswerable question which he thought would destroy completely the legality of my friend's action.

Q. But not being a commissioned officer you were not empowered to sign any commission.

A. My signature was not complete till I had lifted my pen from the paper, and when I had done this I was a commissioned officer.

Not bad for a lad of nineteen. The Admiralty were defeated, but at the same time must have been overjoyed to find they had so promising a youngster in the Navy.

It is a great mistake to imagine that midshipmen are devoid of common sense and cannot perfectly well look after themselves. Perhaps the best example of this I ever knew was the act of a very great friend of mine, who when at a port away from England happened to make the acquaintance of a young lady who was "on matrimony bent." One evening after a dance he took her to sit out, when to his dismay she plumped herself down in a sitting position on his knees. The situation was one calling for great presence of mind, so he rose, took her firmly by the shoulders and gently forced her into a neighbouring chair, and said, "You sit there." This was a splendid way of avoiding what might have proved to be a lifelong entanglement.

This reminds me of an essay on women written by a boy about the same age as my friend.

> "Oh! the gladness of her gladness when she's glad,
> Ah! the sadness of her sadness when she's sad.
> But the gladness of her gladness and the sadness of her sadness
> Are nothing to her badness when she's bad!"

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It must not be forgotten that midshipmen had a good deal to put up with. A junior midshipman green to the ways of a seagoing ship was the butt of many, and his mistakes made him rather a nuisance to everybody until he learned his work. So he met with little pity and a good deal of sarcasm. He had to try to please everybody, with the usual result. The Commander expected him to do deck work at the same time that the Naval Instructor wanted him at school. He had to pass examinations in school work, gunnery, seamanship, and engineering every six months, and got disliked by the Captain if he did not do well. I calculate that while in the Navy I had to pass sixty-seven examinations; surely enough to try the temper of any boy.

Engineering was a great stumbling-block to some who had no bent for mechanical details. One shipmate I remember not only said that boilers were made of lead, but excelled himself by writing that the "pitch of the screw is 1·4576 and is usually made of brass." Probably we were all responsible for "howlers," but while others have slipped the memory, that one I have never forgotten.

As we grew to be senior midshipmen matters improved; we were then of real use in the ship and were treated accordingly, but still we had the bugbear of examinations always present and always looming in the future.

Of course there are many tales to be told of gallantry and good deeds by the youngsters, who, taken all round, are as fine a set of boys as the United Kingdom can produce. Such deeds in the Navy are taken as a matter of course and are never

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recorded, and in fact hardly remembered. If therefore in this chapter I have dealt with tales of their exuberant spirits, we must not forget the other side of their character and the good work done by them in the positions of responsibility which fell daily to their lot on board ship.

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CHAPTER VI

HOSPITALS

I am shot—Malta Hospital—Haslar Hospital—Hospital treatment—Our nurses—Discharged from Haslar—Petty spite—De Lesseps and the Canal—Egyptian War—Our Boatswain—The Boatswain's desire—The hogging machine—Captain Bosanquet—Seamanship examination—Greenwich College.

In the beginning of 1882 we visited Corfu, and of course I got all the shooting I could, but disaster dogged me. On one occasion I took my gun in its case, as we had to make a long trip over to the Albanian coast, and after finishing shooting put the gun back, foolishly leaving the strapping to be done later; some kind person, wishing to help, lifted the guncase by the handle and the barrels fell overboard. Overboard several of us went, but the mud was too soft and deep to find them. A few days afterwards I was persuaded to join another party. I did not want to go; I had lost my best friend in the shape of my gun and did not fancy using another. However, I went and was promptly shot by one of my shipmates.

It was a cold day and we had spotted that some duck had settled on a pool on the far side of a mound. We crawled to stalk them. I arrived at the mound slightly in advance of my companion, and lifted myself up on my hands to look over the top, when my friend, while full cocking with numbed fingers, let a hammer slip; the gun went off and the charge passed into my left arm and side, and the majority landed in my wrist.

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Fortunately my friend rarely indulged in this rough shooting, so had not changed his cartridges from snipe to duck shot. So the pellets were only No. 8. I had a four-mile walk back with the Albanian dogs yapping at my heels; instinctively they knew I was wounded and thought they could take liberties. I nearly lost my hand; about 150 pellets were picked out or subsequently cut out, and there still remain about seventy in my side, arm, and wrist.

Captain Charles Hotham was very kind and gave me one of his spare cabins. While lying in bed, the ship went to heavy gunfiring practice, and I remember well that my nerves were so unstrung that I hid my head under the bedclothes to try to avoid hearing the firing. It is difficult to imagine why my disordered nerves should have associated the "boom" of a heavy gun with my wound.

There would be no reason to deal with this episode further, if it were not for the insight that I got into the naval hospitals of that period. An aneurism developed in the wounded radial artery, which led to my being discharged to Malta Hospital under John Dick, one of the best surgeons in the Navy at that time. Every possible cure was tried before operating, first a tourniquet; but after three hours the pain made me eat some of my pillow. Cones of lead apex downwards were balanced on my wrist and numerous other devices were tried. At last it was decided to tie the radial. I went into the operating theatre about noon and came out at 4 o'clock. I preferred not to have an anæsthetic and enjoyed having a view of the inside arrangements of the vessels in the human wrist. The length of time was accounted for by an attempt being

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made to get at the end of the radial beyond the sac of the aneurism, but after a couple of hours the surgeons gave it up as hopeless.

It was shortly after this that the Admiralty started the Training Squadron and withdrew all the senior midshipmen from the Mediterranean ships to join the cruisers. This led to my being discharged from Malta to Haslar Hospital. Had I been left at Malta under the surgeons who knew my case, and their treatment continued, I would have been cured in another fortnight. As it was I was pitchforked among new surgeons with only a written word or two about my case; the treatment was altered and the whole trouble broke out again.

At this time the main standard by which the efficiency of a Naval Hospital was judged was that of economy in its administration. The official view seemed to be that one surgeon was probably about as good as another, but the real jewel was the man who could save one or two thousand pounds a year. Never on one single day that I was in hospital, except when I had fever, did I get enough to eat to satisfy hunger. Ever since I could remember I had looked forward to the day I should commence smoking, but I had resolved not to start doing so till I had finished my examinations for a Sub-Lieutenant, since I had heard that it might affect my brain power. But in Malta Hospital hunger broke down that resolution and I asked to be allowed to smoke in the ward. "What does a boy like you want to smoke for?" asked the surgeon. "To take my appetite away," said I, which answer got me some beggarly addition in diet.

In Haslar economy was carried to such an extreme

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that the authorities themselves recognised that the food was insufficient for the patients and allowed them to buy food and have it sent in from outside. This was an excellent arrangement from their point of view as it saved the cost of our keep. There was a dread legend that our ward was haunted by the ghost of an engineer student who had been starved to death!

A naval hospital in 1882 was a weird place; there were no lady nurses, we had three old pensioners to look after our ward. The senior was an old gentleman with a long white beard who had been a Royal Marine in some bygone age; his one interest in life was to read Darwin's books, which he did hour by hour. The next was an ex-petty officer who was lame and deaf and blind. He was absolutely useless from every point of view; his speech also was difficult to understand. The last was an ex-captain of the hold, fresh from rolling casks about the holds of ships, and much more suited to this class of work than to handling patients. Presumably it was cheap to employ pensioners.

The senior surgeon, David Haran, who looked after me, was a charming man and as up-to-date as conditions in the Navy then permitted. After I had been a month in hospital he advised me to leave and go under a London specialist who dealt with aneurisms. He honestly told me that he had never seen one before, and that I had much better go under a man who dealt with them every day. So next morning I interviewed the great surgeon who presided over the establishment, and asked for my discharge so as to carry out David Haran's suggestion. His answer was typical of the man. "You will leave this place either cured or discharged from the service." He might well have

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added "or dead." Truly indeed might a hospital under the charge of such a man have had the motto "Abandon hope all ye that enter here" inscribed over its gates. My interview, however, woke him up, and it was determined to try to perform the same operation which two months before had been found impossible at Malta. It was fortunate I had not had an anæsthetic then, as I knew thoroughly the impossibility of doing what they proposed to attempt. Haran told me he himself did not think it wise to operate, so I telegraphed to my father, who went at once to the Admiralty and got my discharge, much to the wrath of the dragon in charge of Her Majesty's Hospital.

Mr. Ericchsen took me in hand and had a special instrument made with a screw; this was fitted and I went home for a fortnight. I was determined to give it a fair trial and kept the screw so tightly pressing on my hand that I wore a hole in the flesh. When I reported myself to Ericchsen he was horrified and sent me away again for a month for the wound to heal, before returning for an operation. The very morning he was going to operate the aneurism cured itself, or rather it was cured by the inflammation set up by the wound made by the screw. As an anæsthetist had been engaged, Ericchsen said it was a pity not to use him, so I was laid out and given chloroform while he cut shot out of my hand. I was much annoyed, as I was by that time quite accustomed to being cut and hated chloroform, and had had dozens of shot taken out without any form of anæsthetic.

Now all the above muddle and mistreatment culminated in an extraordinary exhibition of petty-mindedness on the part of those in authority who

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governed the medical department of the Navy. The Egyptian War was in full swing, Alexandria had been bombarded, my ship the *Northumberland* was in Egyptian waters and I wanted to join her as soon as possible. Immediately therefore that Ericchsen had finished with me and pronounced me fit, I went to the Admiralty to be medically examined; there I was laughed at and told that with open cuts on my hand (each only one-tenth of an inch long, mind you) I could not be looked on as fit to serve. I went back to Ericchsen, who was the leading surgeon of the day; needless to say he was much annoyed and gave me a letter to the Examiner to say that I was quite fit in every way to serve. Again I was mocked at and told that he, the Examiner, was the person to decide on my fitness, and he sentenced me to go to the country for a fortnight until I was healed. Up I went again to the Admiralty after the fortnight and pointed out that my little cuts were healed, that my ship was taking part in the war, that it would take a fortnight to reach her, that therefore there was plenty of time for me to recoup thoroughly, and that owing to the length of time of my illness every day I was kept ashore was a day lost to me in seniority. I was told to open the door of the room, and then to hang on to the sharp-edged top of the door with my left hand, the hand that incidentally had been in a sling for several months. It is difficult enough to hold on to such sharp edges at any time, so of course I dropped to the floor. With a saturnine smile the Head Torturer gave me to understand that another time it would be better not to be discharged from Haslar Hospital against the wish of the medical authorities. Thus out of pure vindictiveness I was kept waiting

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doing nothing until I had lost six weeks' seniority and in the end only joined the *Northumberland* after the war was over.

My one consolation was that if I had not left Haslar, I would probably have lost even more time and my hand into the bargain.

The chief work of the Navy in the Egyptian War of 1882 lay in the bombardment of Alexandria and the seizure of the Suez Canal. The latter was well devised and smartly carried out.

I was told at that time, by a man on the spot, a curious tale about M. de Lesseps, who was furious at what he called the infringement of the neutrality of the Canal. When Ismalia was seized the telegraph office was of course occupied at the earliest moment. Shortly after, in came a message from de Lesseps to Arabi Pasha saying: "The English are only a few in numbers; come and drive them into the sea!" As the statement was perfectly true a message was substituted and sent saying that the British were in considerable force and therefore that an attack was inadvisable. A day or two afterwards when the *Helicon*, with Sir Beauchamp Seymour and Sir Garnet Wolseley on board, came into the Canal, M. de Lesseps went on board and protested violently that the Canal had been seized and his employees turned out. When he had exhausted himself, Sir Beauchamp said: "M. de Lesseps, please read that," and handed him the telegraph form on which was his message to Arabi. He turned round and went straight down the ladder, and left the ship without another word.

The *Northumberland* was attached to the Channel Fleet, which in those days cruised at a speed of from

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three and a half to four knots in order to economise coal. It is not an exaggeration to say that the cinders were burnt twice over with the coal to make sure that no waste took place. A trip from Alexandria to England therefore took a shade over a month.

We had about that time on board an old Boatswain, an old sea-dog, whose biblical knowledge was more colloquial than accurate. One day I heard him apostrophising the fo'c'sle men, thus: "You're a blooming Portuguese army you are, all blessed centurions. I say to one of you beggars, go, and he comes, and to another, do this, and he sees me damned first."

Talking of boatswains reminds me of the old fellow who towards the end of his period of service daily planned how to enjoy to the utmost his well-earned retirement. When that happy time at last arrived he decided to rent a house—he was a bachelor—and to hire a boy to call him every morning at 6 a.m. and say:

"Four o'clock, sir, raining and blowing hard, and the First Lieutenant he wants you at once on the fo'c'sle." Then old Neptune imagined himself rolling over in bed and saying, luxuriously, "Tell the First Lieutenant to go to hell."

There was a peculiar story attaching to one of the officers in the ship; we will call him Jones for precisely the same reason that the village rhymer wrote on a tombstone:

> "Here lies the bones of Mary Jones.
> Her name was Smith, it was not Jones,
> But Jones is put to rhyme with Bones."

The mention of epitaphs leads me to stray from the tale and quote another that I have never seen in print:

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" Here lies Jane Clive and her children five ;
Three is dead and two's alive ;
The ones that's dead preferring rather
To die with mother than live with father."

This throws rather a lurid after-glow on the life of Mr. Clive ; perhaps, however, he was merely at enmity with the village sexton, who usually was responsible for these poetic effusions.

But to return. Jones at one time of his life had been a Sub-Lieutenant in a flagship, which had as Commander a man famed for cool cheek and bounce. The latter was one of those astonishing people who could do and say anything ; at times his calm impertinence simply knocked the wind out of a victim and left him gasping. One day, just before the ship left the dock-yard for sea, two wagons arrived on the jetty with some huge packing-cases. In due course the receipt book was brought to Jones to sign for what was described as a " hogging machine," that is a machine for scrubbing off the weed that grows on the bottom of a ship. The Admiralty evidently were anxious to try the arrangement and considered this flagship a suitable ship from which to get a report as to its efficiency. Jones went to the Commander and asked for instructions as to where to stow these monuments of inventive genius. The Commander refused to have them on deck, and told Jones to consult the First Lieutenant about stowing them in his kingdom below deck. The First Lieutenant said it was impossible to get them down ; moreover, if he could he had nowhere to stow them. In despair, Jones returned to the Commander, who told him to put them in a shed close by and to leave them there. So the ship sailed leaving the marooned " hogging machine " behind.

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In due course came an inquiry from the Admiralty for a report on the hogging machine. The Admiral and the Captain knew nothing about it, and the Commander professed ignorance; so the Admiralty were informed that no knowledge of the hogging machine existed on board the ship. Later on came a letter ordering a further inquiry and stating that the receipt for the machine had been signed for by one J. Jones. Jones was accordingly sent for, and at once said he knew all about it, that in accordance with the Commander's order it was put into a shed and had been left behind in Portsmouth Dockyard. The Commander, without blushing, said he must have been misunderstood. So Jones of course was found to blame, superseded and sent out to a gunboat on the West Coast of Africa. Here the tale might have ended if it had not been that the little cherub whose duty it is to sit aloft and look after poor Jack was not on this occasion asleep, but did his duty by sending a slave-ship in the way of the gunboat. Jones boarded her, showed great gallantry, was promoted, and went home. Here again the story might have ended had it not been that the very first person Jones ran up against in Portsmouth Dockyard was his friend the Commander, who immediately shouted: "Hullo, Jones my boy, I congratulate you on your promotion. I got you that." "What do you mean?" said Jones. "You remember that hogging machine," said the other. "If it had not been left behind you would never have gone out to the West Coast and got your promotion." "But did you remember telling me to put it in the shed?" said the flabbergasted Jones. "Of course I did," replied the other, "but I was not fool enough to say

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so." Now what could one do with a person of that sort ?

George Bosanquet was at that time Captain of the *Northumberland*; he had in his earlier days distinguished himself in the China War and had been given a gold medal for some gallant exploit. He was rather taciturn, had been wounded in, or near, his liver which made him rather caustic in the morning, but was possessed of real *sang-froid*. This was shown one day when the Commander, a rather excitable individual, threw his telescope at a man who had fallen overboard and then grasped the life-buoy with both hands. Bosanquet remarked, " Your telescope, Smith, won't save the man."

One day, shortly after I had left the ship, when the Fleet were at anchor off the Dalmatian coast, Bosanquet came on board later than usual, covered with mud from head to foot. The next day he fell in the ship's company and addressed them; saying, that undoubtedly they had heard of the condition that he had come on board in the night before and that it was only fair to tell them what had happened. It appears that while taking a walk in the country he had been accosted by a brigand and asked for his purse ; but, as Bosanquet told the ship's company, " He did not consider it right for the Captain of a British man-of-war to give up his purse to anyone who asked for it," so they fought fiercely and long, rolling over and over in the mud, but at last the brigand escaped. Bosanquet never forgave his spaniel for running away and not helping him. But would any spaniel have behaved differently ?

In those days five examinations were necessary before finally obtaining the rank of Sub-Lieutenant.

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First came the seamanship examination ; after passing this you were promoted to acting Sub-Lieutenant and wore the uniform of that rank, and then, at as early a date as possible, went to Greenwich College for a course lasting nine months. The examination at the end included elementary mathematics, navigation, French, physics, and a host of such subjects. If this was passed satisfactorily you moved on to Portsmouth for courses in pilotage, torpedo work, and gunnery ; so there were five examinations in each of which it was possible to obtain a first-, second-, or third-class. The ideal was to get one hundred marks more than those necessary for a first-class certificate at Greenwich, and further a first-class in each of the other four. If this was accomplished, your promotion to Lieutenant was antedated to nine months from the date of passing the seamanship examination.

The seamanship examination was usually conducted by three Post-Captains. It was looked on as being to a certain extent a lottery, as the severity of the examination depended on the constitution of the Board; but a really competent midshipman had little to fear as to the results. One Captain, it is true, gave out that he did not believe any midshipman could know enough to warrant him being given a first-class, and that therefore he never intended to award one. Anything more unjust or unfair could hardly be imagined ; needless to say, the Captain was not a brilliant officer himself, and as a matter of fact several midshipmen in his own ship had a far better knowledge of up-to-date naval seamanship than this tyrant himself possessed. Personally I had no qualms ; I had a very fair Board, but was horribly taken aback at the

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start by the President saying that the Board had come to the decision not to *refuse* to examine me, but they would note on my certificate that I had not produced certain astronomical observations I was supposed to have taken, but which for want of opportunity I had been unable to do. However, after an hour and a half they were pleased to say that I had done so well that they would say nothing about the missing observations. It turned out that a few days before they had examined a rank duffer, and in comparison I suppose I showed up fairly well.

Immediately after this I went on to Greenwich College and worked ten hours a day for the first two months, then up to thirteen a day for the last six, that is from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., 9.30 to 1 p.m., 2 to 4 p.m., 5 to 8.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. to 12.30 a.m. We took life seriously in those days. It was interesting to note that the *Britannia* examination was confirmed, since of the six of us who had then passed out midshipmen—poor Travers, by far the cleverest of our lot, had died; Fane Hervey,[1] John Scott,[2] Arthur Waymouth, and myself all got first-classes and promotion marks, and Williams, who did not do a stroke of work till the last two months, when he worked like a nigger, only just missed his first-class by a few marks.

To the average student the course was largely a farce; there was insufficient time allowed to attempt to teach subjects with a view to their being remembered, and the whole of our energies were concentrated on cramming such things as would be useful in the examination. We ended up a fortnight's examination with two days of

[1] Now Marquis of Bristol.
[2] Now Duke of Buccleuch.

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three examinations in each, after which we broke up, nearly broken down, and went home to rest.

The instruction was undoubtedly of use to those who expected to take up further courses in order to qualify as Gunnery or Torpedo Lieutenants, but for the average officer it was largely a waste of time. One of my classmates was hurried on with the remainder of us from algebra to mechanics and dynamics while still unable to solve a quadratic equation.

I do not remember any memorable incident occurring during my stay at Greenwich; we were too serious and hard at work, and looked on non-workers and disturbers of the peace with an unfavourable eye.

After Greenwich we went to Portsmouth College for the gunnery, torpedo, and pilotage courses, and when these were completed I went up to the Admiralty to ask for a ship.

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CHAPTER VII

H.M.S. "CRUISER"

Pleasures of a sailing ship—Wearing in a gale—Sleepiness—Trying the rate of sailing—A collision—Remarks on collisions—A record—Queer collisions—A near escape—The Chaplain's mistake—A salutary punishment—The Plymouth Brother—Fancy punishments—Gin in the water tank—Offences generally—Extra drill—A mile round the deck—A slacker cured—Ridicule a reforming agent—The story of the *Lark*—A story—Yet another—A mishap.

FOR several months while I was a midshipman, and also for a year after my promotion to Lieutenant, I served in a sailing sloop named the *Cruiser*; the last ship in the Navy to be without engines. She was attached to the Mediterranean Squadron for the instruction of midshipmen and young seamen in the art of handling a ship under sail, and in the various duties that fall to the lot of seamen in a sailing ship. Batches of six of the senior midshipmen were selected from various ships and lent to her for periods of six months. The enjoyment of this time varied with the temperament of the midshipmen. Personally I enjoyed every second of the time, except when I was sea-sick. Truly did the boy describe his feelings, both mental and physical, under the strain of sea-sickness, when he said that "the first day he was at sea he was afraid he would be drowned, and the next day he was afraid he would not be." When once the sea-sickness was over all was a pleasure and a delight.

I can imagine no finer sport than that of sailing a

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fast square-rigged ship with a smart crew. In fine weather the whole combination of the ship, sails, masts and crew pleases the eye ; every line is a curve as the sails belly to the wind and the masts bend under strain. The ship is of course spotless, as there is no smoke to dirty her, and each man of the crew is ready to spring to his place at any order. In tacking, wearing, box hauling, or making a stern board you see and feel the ship responding gracefully to your adjustment of yards and sails. While harnessing the wind to your purpose you feel that you are controlling a driving force that is invisible, yet from subtle indications akin to instinct you can gauge its strength and direction, and by manœuvring the yards and sails, force it to drive the ship in any direction you may desire. Or again, take a gale of wind with the sails reefed down, the night black, the wind howling and whistling, and the ship "sending" and "pitching" in the heavy sea ! All the time the wind and sea seem to try furiously to overpower the ship ; but instead, by the science of sailing, the wind is compelled to drive her forward through the water in some safe direction, and the sea in turn is forced to lift her hull harmlessly instead of breaking on board and engulfing her.

In wearing ship in bad weather, that is in passing round stern to wind so as to put the ship on to the other tack, every faculty has to be on the alert; since a mistake in working the yards, either by being too soon or too late, probably means an accident. As the ship falls off before the wind the heavy rolling causes the great yards to grind, strain and whip at the trusses, and the flapping of any loose canvas cracks like continuous thunder. Then as the

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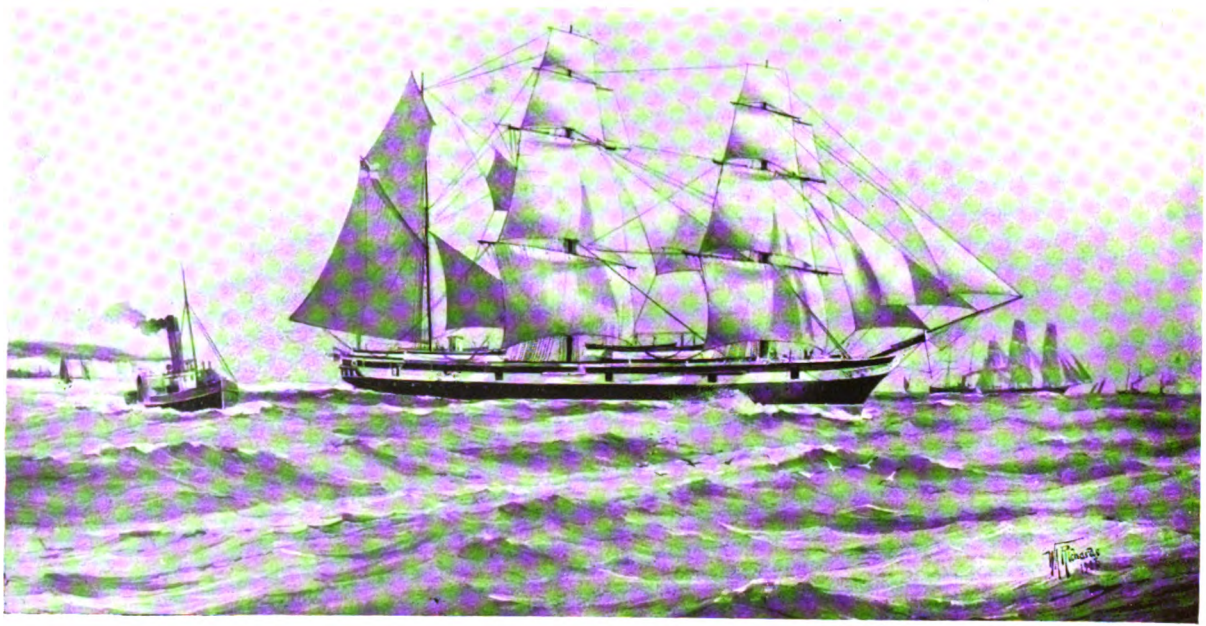

88] H.M.S. "CRUISER." [*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

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wind works forward towards the beam it fills the forward sails, while the sea being now on the quarter lifts the stern, and over she goes with a lurch obedient to the joint effort of wind and sea. There she stays, lying well over until as her head comes up gradually toward the wind, the sea is brought before the beam, when she lifts and ducks her nose into its trough, at the same time taking a sea in over the weather gunwale which washes the decks down fore and aft. All this time the officer in charge has, so to speak, been feeling her pulse and helping her by the trimming of yards and working the helm.

In the Merchant Navy sailing-ship life is different; there it is a case of few men and killing hard work, no romance—just plain hard labour. The difference between handling a merchant ship and frigate was much the same as between running a steam traction engine and a motor-car. Nor so far as enjoyment is concerned can the handling of a modern battleship of thirty or forty thousand tons be compared with the working of a frigate in the old days.

Unless it was a flat calm, an officer of the watch of a sailing ship had always something to do: sails had to be trimmed, or to be reset, as the ropes stretched, taken in or reefed as the wind varied; for on board of a man-of-war every sail had, at all times, to be as flat as a board and every yard exactly trimmed. On the other hand, in a calm at night there was absolutely nothing to do except to try to keep awake. I have often fallen asleep walking up and down the bridge on a hot, calm Mediterranean night and only been awakened by stumbling into the bridge rails. I had one midshipman under me who as officer of the watch absolutely

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could not keep awake; it was not his fault, the fact had to be accepted, and the only thing to be done was gradually to break him in by having him woke every quarter of an hour whether, as an Irishman would say, he was asleep or not!

Well, our time in the *Cruiser* was full of incident. Commander Darwin was appointed in command, and our First Lieutenant, Farquharson, who was the smartest First Lieutenant I ever knew, took infinite trouble in teaching us all the tricks of the trade.

The new Captain took an early opportunity of trying the fastest rate of sailing of the ship. So one day when it was blowing up for a gale he crammed on every sail he could get on her, stay-sails and all, with the wind about two points free. Over she heeled till the water came in at the lee scuppers and the upper deck was awash the leeside. We got 13 knots, or about 14½ miles per hour—not bad for a short ship in a rising sea. Of course the moment we began to shorten sail ropes began to carry away, and sails to split owing to the flapping of the uncontrolled canvas. Soon, however, we had her shortened down from every stitch she could carry to treble-reefed topsails and then bent the storm sails.

In the *Cruiser* the midshipmen undertook the full duties of officers of the watch as soon as they showed themselves fit to do so. This fostered in them, at an early age, a spirit of self-reliance, and accustomed them to responsibility. One of the midshipmen, however, enlivened our time by having a collision with an Italian barque—the *Buon Pastore*. At about 9 o'clock in the evening we collided,

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struck her in the port waist and our yards locked, all of our head gear went aboard of her and one of her main chain plates got into a cleft in our cutwater and bound us firmly together. Fortunately there was but little sea running, but nevertheless the ships did a good deal of grinding during the hour or so that we were locked together. When we got clear she had lost both her fore and main masts and was a complete wreck; so we took her in tow and made for Syracuse. Next day I remember being sent to take charge of the wreck while she was still in tow. My first command was of course a joy never to be forgotten, but what a wreck! Only the mizzen mast was standing and the gunwale was ground down to the upper deck, which latter was very little above her water-line, so that every wave—and there was quite a fair sea running that day—broke on board, submerging the upper deck entirely, so that nothing remained in view above water but the poop and the fo'c'sle, which seemed for seconds together to be two detached islands floating in the open sea; but eventually we got her in and anchored.

The wreck was next day towed to Malta, whither we also sailed to refit and where the midshipmen of the Fleet under the Boatswain of the flagship had to re-rig the *Buon Pastore*. Her cargo was grain, which the Government bought, and I believe the difference in the purchase price and that which would have had to be paid later on nearly covered the demurrage[1] and the cost of her refit. The offending midshipman whose fault caused the accident was tried by court of inquiry. The court found him peculiarly dense, and at last the president asked him if he was not

[1] The sum paid to the owners for the detention of the vessel.

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well. He replied: "No, sir, I think I have the measles," and so he had! The court adjourned hurriedly *sine die.*

It is a matter of some curiosity to consider the number of chances against two ships colliding on the open sea. First, they have to move across deep waters so as to be at the same spot at the same time; secondly, a collision, except in the case of fog, must be due to direct carelessness, and acts of carelessness are not frequent at sea. When we consider therefore that the chance of an act of carelessness has to be superimposed on the chance of exact meeting, it is wonderful that collisions are as frequent as they are. I knew one officer who held the record for being responsible for a remarkable collision. He kept the morning watch from 4 a.m. till 8 a.m. and again the watch from 6 to 8 p.m. At daylight, probably about 5 o'clock, he sighted a ship, the wind was light, in fact at times it was nearly a calm, but he managed to collide with her at 7.30 p.m. after she had been in sight all day. An Irishman, however, fairly took the palm as regards collision, by being, according to his own statement, in two ships that met.

I have known of some queer collisions. The two quaintest were between a destroyer and a man on a bicycle, and between an aeroplane and a bicyclist. The first occurred on the Haslar sea-wall at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, when a destroyer, trying to enter, missed the entrance in a fog and ran up the wall. The noise and shock upset a man who was bicycling along the top. The second occurred in Flanders during the war, when one of the Dunkirk aeroplanes got caught in a fog, and in coming down low to find out its where-

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abouts came close to a bicyclist who promptly fell off his machine.

The *Cruiser* had several narrow shaves of being lost. Perhaps the nearest of all was when trying to beat up in the Doro Channel she failed to work sufficiently to windward and had to anchor on a rocky bottom. The cable of the first anchor parted, and when close to the rocks the ship gave a heavy jerk as if the second had gone also, and she forged astern, but brought up again with her stern close to the rocks. There she rode out the gale. When the wind took off and she weighed, it was found that both arms of the second anchor had broken off close to the shank, which accounted for the feeling that the second cable had parted. The stumps of the arms must have jambed between two rocks and held the ship throughout the gale.

There is of course no more dangerous bottom to anchor on than rock. In the first place the blow to the anchor on dropping, especially with the old-pattern anchors, was liable to break an arm; and secondly, no grip is afforded by rock as is the case with mud or sand, into which an anchor sinks and holds like grim death.

This fact reminds me of an unfortunate mistake made by a zealous Chaplain clearly showing how careful laymen should be to avoid seeking parallels from a technical profession with which they are not thoroughly familiar. The sermon had been excellent and fervent. The subject was the parable illustrating the desirability of building a house on rock and not on sand. At the finish the Padre ended with the unfortunate question: "And now, my brothers, as seamen, I ask you on which would you sooner drop the

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anchor which is to hold your ship in safety ; should it not be on the hard, firm rock, and not on the soft, shifting sands ? "

The *Cruiser*, during my time in her, nearly left her bones on the Albanian coast ; but that is too technical a story to be told here.

About this time an incident occurred which is an object-lesson of how punishment can reform an individual. One young seaman took it in his head that he would defy everyone in the ship. It seemed to him a simple matter to say that he intended to do no more work ; undoubtedly he thought that he would go to prison ; but that would merely be a gate whereby to leave the Navy. Moreover, the Corradino prison at Malta was at that time under a mild regime ; whereas a few years back the place had been a terror to evil-doers, a stay there had become more or less a rest cure. Our friend gave out that he would do no more work and obey no order, and he therefore was made a prisoner while awaiting proper trial.

As the ship was a small one and had one deck only below the upper deck, his place of detention was of necessity the after-part of the men's mess deck. Here he made himself at home, and proceeded at the top of his voice to blaspheme every officer from the Captain down. Such a proceeding was obviously bad for discipline, so, after having been repeatedly warned, energetic measures had to be resorted to. He was taken down into the hold by the head of the Ship's Police and the proper authority ; after a few minutes they reappeared and a tarpaulin was put over the hatch. The young fool continued his cursings for a short time, but gradually these grew weaker, then stopped, then

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cries came up for mercy, followed by promises of good behaviour in the future. He was, however, informed that his punishment was for half an hour, and for half an hour he would have to remain as he was. After this time had elapsed he was released—a cured man; he never gave any more trouble. I never inquired what the punishment was because I could fairly well guess, without doubt it was distinctly an illegal one; but, whether illegal and perhaps ultra-severe, instead of the man being put into prison and turned adrift on the world on a downward career, he learned in one short half-hour that his was not "the only ego in the cosmos," and that his will had to be bent and made to conform to the decencies laid down by the will of the majority. He accordingly became a useful member of society instead of a wastrel.

Another very peculiar case came before our Captain, Sacheveral Darwin, whose cold blunt common sense prevented a man's life being ruined. Our captain of the quarter-deck, a petty officer second-class, was an excellent man, rather slow but remarkably steady and reliable. He was, however, a Plymouth Brother and a religious monomaniac, and, in pursuance of his belief, held Bible-classes for the seamen. Now, being a training ship and carrying a number of young ordinary seamen and no Chaplain, the First Lieutenant considered that it was not right to have a man teaching sectarian doctrines to the exclusion of other recognised religions, and so told the man that he must discontinue his classes. To his astonishment the man, who was a model of disciplined behaviour, replied that he intended to continue to hold the classes. This was rank disobedience of a lawful command and the case went

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before the Captain. This dialogue ensued, I remember it almost word for word:

Captain: Well, you have heard the charge; what have you got to say?

Man: I have nothing to say, sir, except that it is my duty to continue the classes.

Captain: I don't understand. The First Lieutenant has given you an order not to hold the classes and you must obey his order.

Man: I must rather obey my Father's orders, sir.

Captain: I don't know who your father may be, but he seems to be a mighty influential sort of person.

The man proceeded to explain how in the Bible he was ordered to preach the Gospel.

Captain: Look here, my young man, I'm Captain of this ship and you're captain of the quarter-deck of the ship. When I give you an order you have got to obey it; when we are both cold meat in a box, then the other man steps in. Do you see?

He did, and never held another prayer meeting, and the tragedy of the man being disrated and sent to another ship for doing what he firmly believed to be his bounden duty was narrowly averted by Darwin's bald common sense, and blunt way of putting his point.

Fancy punishments are illegal; only certain stereotyped forms are allowed by the regulations, but a lapse from this rule is sometimes of advantage to the man.

A very well-known Commander had a man brought before him for being drunk on board. The man, in order to raise a laugh on the lower deck and to go as

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near as he dared to being impudent, put forward the excuse that someone in the ship had a "down" on him and had put gin in the water tank on the lower deck, which he had innocently drunk and so become intoxicated. The Commander instantly saw that the double offence was best met by turning the laugh against the man. He therefore took up a condoling attitude and said: "Now I do call that bad luck for your messmates to play you such a low-down trick. But we'll catch them, my lad. Master-at-arms, put him sentry on the tank for a fortnight. He must wear a cutlass belt to show his authority, and of course he will not have his hammock, but must sleep on the deck so as to be on the alert, and he must have his meals near the tank, otherwise someone might tamper with it in his absence." So the young man for an unpleasant fortnight had to endure physical discomfort as well as the gibes of the ship's company. After the time was up he appeared again, with a lugubrious mien, before the Commander. "Well, have you caught him?" said the latter. "No, sir," was the reply; "they won't do it again, they know I am on the look out." "Don't be down-hearted, my lad," said the Commander. "Don't be down-hearted. We'll catch 'em yet. Master-at-arms, put him on for another fortnight!"

The investigation and punishment of offences are the bane of the life of the senior executive officer on board. Every day, or every other day at least, the executive officer next in seniority to the Captain has to hold a petty-sessional court for about half an hour, when offenders of all descriptions are brought before him. The offences vary; occa-

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sionally a few are serious, but the majority are trivial.

This recurrent administration of justice is the most uncongenial of all the work that falls to the lot of an officer. Slackness and laziness are the chief complaints, especially against the younger seamen, and since the punishments allowed by the Admiralty for such offences are only combinations of extra work and reduction of comfort they are but small deterrents to constant offenders. Punishments not authorised by the Admiralty are rigidly forbidden, and rightly too, since it is impossible to say what weird results ingenuity in invention on the part of eccentric individuals might not produce.

When I was Commander of a ship in the Mediterranean I soon came to the conclusion that the want of exercise, and consequent lethargy of the liver, was responsible for at least three-quarters of the cases brought before me. I therefore started an extra drill class for constant offenders. It was particularly explained to the culprits that this was not a punishment, but merely a reasonable amount of exercise which was being given them in order to ensure a healthier physical, and therefore moral condition. Each day these youths did one hour's drill. The only limitation I set the petty officer in charge was, that for the whole hour there was to be no "stand easy"; legs, arms, and all muscles were to be exercised in rotation, but the exercise was never to cease. Five minutes' physical drill would be followed by a run over the masthead, then dumb-bells, then a run of three or four times round the upper deck, then over the lower boom into a boat and back again, and so on. The slackers did hate that

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hour! But it did them good; and by its aid the punishments on board were reduced by at least one-half.

I started also in hot weather a special exercise for the whole ship's company by making them run round the decks each evening for a distance equal to one mile, while the band played to make the exercise lively for them; this was afterwards universally adopted by all the ships.

One young man in the ship seemed hopeless. He never by any chance was where he should have been, but was always late, always trying to shirk. As a last resource I made his messmates responsible for him, and every day, and all day, one of them in turn had to take charge of him and see that he always was up to time. The man disliked this, but his messmates disliked it still more, as it was a direct infringement of their leisure time; they therefore led him such a life that eventually he turned the corner the right way, and before I left the ship he had become quite a promising seaman on the high road to promotion.

Ridicule is a potent means of reforming hardened sinners if carefully used. There was a case I knew, of a man serving in the barracks at Portsmouth, who would not learn to swim. He said he could not; he appeared to try, but it was obvious to everyone that he would not. His Commander, who was a cheery person, made him wear a life-belt all day in case he fell into the puddles on the drill ground and got drowned! The chaff of the whole of the men was too much for him, and within a month he passed his swimming examination.

The drawback to sailing-ship life is the uncertainty as to the time a voyage will take. A particular run may

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on one occasion take one day, on another a week. Once a Financial Secretary to the Admiralty visited Malta, and knowing nothing about ships, sailing or otherwise, asked our First Lieutenant "how long the *Cruiser* took to get from place to place"—a question about as brainy as asking what is the size of a lump of chalk. The First Lieutenant said: "Oh, about ten days," with which the politician was quite satisfied.

A feeling of being isolated and cut off from the world is inherent in sailing-ship life. The period of duration of the cruise and the direction you sail in at any moment are largely determined by the wind. Once we were a week making good fifteen miles, while on another cruise we ran three hundred and thirty miles in thirty hours, or at the rate of eighteen hundred miles a week. No programme or forecast could be made. Some years after I had left the *Cruiser* she was expected to arrive at Malta on a certain day; but, the night before she was due, she fell in with a gale and had to run before it, eventually turning up in a harbour of one of the islands in the Greek Archipelago. For over a fortnight the authorities did not know where she was and feared she had been lost in the gale. This reminds me of a story that is true, but so queer as to be hardly credible, of how a man-of-war in the middle of the last century disappeared from human ken for two years.

There was a certain gunboat on the West Coast of Africa which we will call the *Lark*. In those days, on that station, the cruising orders given to ships gave the officers in command of small vessels considerable latitude; since slave ships were the quarry and success

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in catching them depended a good deal on the unfettered judgment of the officer on the spot. Well, the *Lark* roamed up the coast and at last, having worked her way up one of the rivers, discovered a British Vice-Consul who was blessed with a pretty daughter, with whom fate decreed that the Lieutenant in command of the gunboat should fall in love, and eventually they became engaged to be married. Shortly after, while at sea he got dispatches ordering him to sail and join the South American Station. Now, he could not take his bride with him in the gunboat, and he did not want to leave her, so he said nothing about the orders, was married by the Vice-Consul, moored the gunboat up to the bank and lived ashore at the Consul's house. Some of the men also married. Everything went on happily until the Admiralty woke up to the fact that the gunboat had not arrived on the South American Coast and was considerably overdue. The Admiral had reported that she had received her orders; presumably therefore she had sailed; and so, as time went on, she was officially notified as lost at sea with all hands. All this time our friend the Lieutenant and his jovial crew were enjoying a *dolce far niente* up a tropical river on the West Coast of Africa. How long this state of things might have continued it is impossible to say, had not another gunboat poked her bows up the river and discovered the officially lost *Lark*. Then the trouble began, and retribution was swift and adequate.

While on the subject of the West Coast here is another slaver story which many will hardly credit, but which is perfectly true. One of the chief actors, a well-known Admiral, died only a few years ago.

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In the early days of steam, a gunboat commanded by A was sent out to the African station. The advantages of steam in catching slavers was obvious, slavers captured meant much prize money, so the Admiral gave A more or less *carte blanche* to cruise where he liked, and at the same time he made him independent of the orders of the Captain of any other ship he might meet who might be senior to him. In due course A spotted a slaver taking in slaves up a river, and anchored his ship low down near the entrance, while waiting for the slaver to fill up and sail; for it was useless to seize her when she was empty, since the prize money depended on the number of slaves released. Another ship, a sailing brig, arrived commanded by B, a man senior to A. Of course A went on board, told B that he was waiting to catch the slaver when she tried to get out to sea and showed him the orders he had received from the Admiral. Soon after returning to his ship A was surprised to get a signal telling him to weigh and proceed to sea. This meant that B was going to steal A's slaver and get the prize money. Since A, by the Admiral's orders, was independent of B, he refused to budge. B then informed A that unless he obeyed his orders he would fire on him. A replied that if he did so he would return the fire. As the hour at which the gunboat had been told to go to sea approached, the brig went to fighting quarters and the gunboat followed suit. When the time of sailing had passed and the gunboat showed no sign of moving, the brig opened fire, the gunboat returned it; and there, in a river on the West Coast of Africa, within the memory of man, two British men-of-war fought an action. After a short

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time the brig weighed and went out to sea; and, queer to relate, was never heard of again. Probably she was capsized in a tornado, a not uncommon ending to the career of a brig on the West Coast. Her loss prevented the duel being generally known or being recorded officially, but the story was preserved by being passed from mouth to mouth, and throws a queer light on the unwritten history of the doings of our ships in the days gone by.

In the slaving days of the Navy we kept many ships employed catching slave ships and liberating the slaves they carried. This work gave plenty of excitement. As the boats were sent away for weeks together to cruise by themselves, slaver-catching afforded a fine training for officers and men. Boarding a slaver dhow required pluck and a certain amount of knowledge. If she was boarded the *lee* side (that is the side over which the large sail was suspended while sailing), a favourite trick of the slave captains was to drop the sail into the boat, so as to cover her up completely, and then to send the slaver crew on top of the sail stabbing through it with their long knives wherever the moving of the canvas betrayed the position of a man underneath. The men imprisoned under the sail were powerless to do anything against this deadly form of attack. One boat met with such a misadventure, and when the dhow cleared off, all the crew were either killed or badly wounded, and the officer had a severe knife cut through the shoulder. They were quite alone, no help was anywhere near, but in spite of wounds they worked the boat in towards the land and anchored in a small harbour. Here they lay for about ten days with all their medical stores used up, and when at last

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another boat put in, it was found that they had been reduced to poulticing the wounds of those who survived with ship's biscuits soaked in cocoa, bandaged on with strips torn from such clothing as they could spare. Their wounds, needless to say, were in an appalling condition.

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CHAPTER VIII

H.M.S. "CRUISER" (*continued*)

My second period in the *Cruiser*—A gun-shy dog—Caught in a white squall—A narrow shave of capsizing—Dinner on board a Swede—American humour—Gibraltar Bay in a Levanter—Shooting at Corfu—Albanian dogs—Rheumatism—Accused of ignorance—Christmas Day troubles—An Irish M.P. and drink—Preparations for war with Russia—Captain Long and the Russian

AFTER finishing my examinations for Sub-Lieutenant, I obtained the requisite certificates and was at once promoted to Lieutenant, with a date back in seniority. I asked for and got appointed to the *Cruiser*. She had recommissioned and all the officers had changed except the Commander in command, Sacheveral Darwin, who, however, shortly after, to our sorrow, left us. The ship had been re-rigged under the new style of rigging and had had wire standing rigging substituted for the old pattern which had been entirely of hemp. There was an additional messmate in the shape of a Maltese bulldog, a brindled animal who would fight any dog of any size and any breed, but was absolutely terrified by the sound of gunfire. We were armed with a few brass carronades, and it was only necessary to go up to one and touch it for "Sonny" to run to his kennel with his tail between his legs and lie shivering with fear. One day when we were firing these pop-guns he broke away from the depths of the ship, where he used to be sent on such occasious, ran up into the upper deck, and so great was his terror that he jumped overboard and swam away from the ship. We had to stop the firing

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practice and lower a boat to pick him up. I have known gun-shy dogs, but never one so gun-shy as "Sonny."

Shortly after I joined the *Cruiser* we left for Algiers, and we had good reason never to forget the night before we arrived off that port. It was my middle watch from midnight to 4 a.m. About 11 o'clock I dressed for the night and lay down on my bunk until it was time to be called to go on deck. It was a glorious night, fine and cloudless, but very warm for February in those waters. The ship had every rag of sail set that would draw, and we were making about three knots an hour in the light breeze that prevailed. In accordance with orders left by the Captain the ship was tacked at half-past 11. I heard the various orders given till the mainyard was hauled, and then, judging from the words of command, there seemed to be some difficulty in bracing it up on the other tack. Then the ship began to heel over more and more till I heard water rushing into the cabin ports on the lee side, so up I got and went on deck. It was at once evident that we had been caught in a first-class white squall, one of those violent squalls that sweep across the Mediterranean without the slightest preliminary warning of barometer or cloud.

A fair pandemonium was raging, the lighter sails had mostly carried away their sheets, and the spanker its outhaul; these were merrily flapping themselves to pieces. The mizzen-top mast had gone (she was barque rigged), the foretop-gallant mast and flying jib-boom also. Tottenham, a first-rate seaman, was officer of the watch and was having a busy time. The topsail haulyards had been let go and the yards trimmed

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for reefing, and fortunately, before the squall struck us, the mainsail had been clewed up as was usual when tacking with the watch. If we had been caught five minutes sooner, before the helm had been put down and the ship's course altered for tacking, we would have had the mainsail set and would have been taken "by the lee"—that is, the squall would have come down on our lee side, flattened all the sails against the masts and rigging, and in all probability we would have capsized, as our standing rigging was entirely of wire and only the lighter masts would have carried away.

The mainsail is the most dangerous of all the sails of a square-rigged ship when she is "taken aback"; it has a tendency to drive the stern of the ship under water, and also to prevent the ship's head *paying off*, which would relieve the pressure of the sails on the ship. It was a common custom in sailing ships to keep an axe strapped low down on the main mast, ready, in cases of emergency, to be used to cut the foot rope of the mainsail, and so let the sail blow itself to pieces and relieve the ship of its burying influence.

As we were a training ship for ordinary seamen we only had a small nucleus of seasoned seamen, so I went aloft forward and superintended the clearing away of the wreckage. The foretop-sail yard was partly lowered for reefing, but was not down on the cap, as it had hung up in the wreckage of the top-gallant mast. As we were short handed aloft I laid out on the lee side of the yard to pass the reef earing: this was my only experience of taking an earing in bad weather. It was an interesting time sitting on the yard outside the lift with

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the ship so much heeled over that below nothing could be seen but the broad lane of foam left by the bow as it ploughed through the rapidly rising sea. The whole scene was grand as viewed from the extremity of the yard: the sky was clear, the mast-heads were describing curves of every eccentricity among the stars, and the sea was one mass of foam; while the groans of the wreckage grinding against the yard, the howling of the wind through the rigging, and the thunder of the rending sails added the wildness necessary to produce a feeling of excitement and exhilaration.

Next day we reached Algiers and stayed ten days to repair the fore top-mast cross-trees which had been broken and also to make good other damages.

While there we met a Swedish man-of-war. The officers kindly asked our wardroom officers to dine and I was one of those who went. The Swedes are a charming race, their Navy is always most friendly with ours, and their hospitality on this occasion was unbounded—in fact too lavish. We sat down to dinner at 4 p.m. and finished at 8 p.m. During this time I had to partake of thirteen different brands of wines, spirits, and liqueurs; for, in spite of all protests, your glass would be filled and some of its contents had in courtesy then to be tasted. We ended up with Scotch whisky bearing a label with a Highlander in a kilt, dancing a reel. Never since have I seen the same brand. We were wise, though young, and survived the ordeal satisfactorily.

This reminds me of American ship hospitality. In those days, long before prohibition was dreamed of,

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no spirits of any sort were allowed on board an American man-of-war, yet whenever you went on board a United States vessel some officer would ask you to come into his cabin and have a glass of "medicine," which was American for whisky. A friend of mine, a Chaplain in the Navy, once tackled one of the officers, and said: "Your regulations do not permit you to have spirits on board, yet all your officers carry some. Surely the authorities must know. Why do they not put a stop to it?" The officer without turning a hair replied: "Do you want to know how I got this whisky on board? I'll tell you. A fine case of old Bourbon whisky came alongside for me marked 'boots.' The senior executive officer said: 'Will you give me your word of honour as a gentleman that there are no spirits in that case?' and I said, 'I will.' That's how I got that whisky on board"; which story, I think, takes the prize as a sample of bare-faced, bald, exaggerated American humour.

After our repairs were completed we left for Gibraltar, and rounded Europa Point into the bay, running before a Levanter. Often had I watched from the Naval Hospital the squalls that in such a gale struck the water of the bay. Coming from the eastward, they shaved the top and south edge of the rocky bluff, and then, whirling in small circular cyclones, descended almost vertically on to the smooth water, sending up a cloud of spray ten to fifteen feet high. Then they gradually expended their energy in rasping the water in front of them as they coursed in any direction that fate apparently willed them to go. Some would run almost parallel to the Rock, some raced to the southward

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towards the Straits, and others dashed over to meet the main current of air which struck with all its force the water near the Spanish shore at Algeciras. I used to speculate what it would be like to try to sail in through such a collection of willywaws. Well, on that day we found out all about it and had quite an energetic time. Under double-reef topsails and top-gallant sails with the courses hauled up and with braces manned both sides, we boxed the yards about trying to use each squall to the best advantage. One minute the ship would be taken flat back, and a few moments after she would be racing along heeling over fifteen degrees first on one tack, then on the other. It proved in the end to be quite hopeless; the wind was too erratic—we lost on one tack as much as we gained on the other, and at last had to submit to the ministrations of a tug.

About this time the hospitalities of one of the charming residences on the Rock were presided over by the kindest of ladies, but one who was fated rarely to open her mouth without putting her foot into it. The *Sultan* had met with an accident and had grounded in the Comimo channel between Malta and Gozo. Captain Rice, her Captain, who afterwards was generally known as "Ground Rice," had to return to England via Gibraltar, and naturally was rather downcast at the loss of so fine a ship and the serious blow to his Service prospects. In need of consolation, he paid an early visit and called on the Chatelaine, who, with her heart overflowing with sympathy, suggested he should apply for the Gibraltar appointment after the Captain-Superintendent's

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time was up, and clinched the advice by saying, "You know, Captain Rice, you could not run the Rock of Gibraltar ashore!"

Another lady, the wife of the Governor of one of the Colonies, was also afflicted with want of tact. One aide-de-camp was driven home; the last straw being when she said, "Oh, Captain Smith, you had better come out with me in the carriage this afternoon, as then I need not take the footman!"

After a stay of a few days we left Gibraltar for Algiers, making the passage of three hundred and thirty miles in thirty hours, which was not bad going for a sloop.

On one of our trips to Corfu we were becalmed in the south part of the Adriatic, and there we lay at the mercy of a heavy sea that happened to be running at the time. We had no means of keeping the ship head to the sea, so she fell off broadside on to it and rolled and rolled and rolled. By a merciful dispensation of the universe, succeeding waves are never of equal length from crest to crest; if they were no ship could put to sea in safety, since she would be certain somewhere to meet with a succession of waves that suited her natural period of rolling, with the result that if she got broadside on to the sea, each succeeding wave would increase the extent of her roll until she rolled completely over. We rolled for twenty-four hours forty-five degrees each way. This does not mean that each roll was as great as forty-five degrees, but that after every five or six rolls this angle would be reached. We had to eat, standing up, any cold food that could be procured. It seemed at times as if we must roll the masts out of the ship. Among other incidents the

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blacksmith's anvil broke adrift, which gave rise to some sensational skipping matches on the part of such of the crew as happened to be in its path—skipping is easier in a calm than with the ship rolling heavily. At last a breeze sprang up and we were able again to get the ship under command. Whether the swell was due to a volcanic disturbance, or the aftermath of a gale of wind, I cannot say, but it was extraordinarily rhythmic in its periods.

Corfu was our headquarters for some weeks; we generally could count on a good breeze with only a moderate sea in the channel between the Island and the mainland. There are few more charming spots in the Mediterranean than Corfu, with an English climate up to July, English vegetation and hedges with sub-tropical profusion of growth. The views are delightful with the snow-clad Albanian hills in the background.

On Saturdays, when the ship was at anchor, we enjoyed pleasant days woodcock or snipe shooting on the mainland in Albania. On one occasion old Tom Woodley, our Vice-Consul, commonly called "honest Tom," lent us a cutter yacht for a few days and we started late in the evening for Fitelia. It fell calm when half-way across, so in the early morning, as there was no sign of a breeze, we all four of us got into the yacht's dinghy with two men and Giulio, the guide, and two dogs, so that the boat had only a few inches of freeboard; and started to pull ashore. When still a couple of miles away a breeze sprang up, bringing with it a little lop, and it was only by sitting close together and right up to the gunwale, thereby turning ourselves into "weather boards," that we managed

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to keep the sea out of the boat and reach the shore without being swamped; but we were wet through and nearly frozen.

In some of the marshes there were deep holes into which the unwary could easily drop. In fact, a friend fell into one of these and could not get out again; he, however, had the sense to rest his gun across between two tussocks and put his elbows over it until he was found and rescued.

On one occasion I was walking across a mud flat with my feet at each step going ankle deep, when one of my companions fired at a snipe almost over his head. The recoil of the charge drove him down into the mud like a nail, and we had some difficulty in extracting him; since, when we pulled to loosen him we sank also. All we could do was to give him a pull, then get our feet on to fresh mud and give him another.

The Albanian dogs were a curse, especially when we were pig shooting. The brutes used then to collect in twos and threes and make dashes at our heels. The natives allowed anyone to knife, but not to shoot, one of these dogs; if one was shot the owner would shoot or knife the offender. Some persons carry a short knife to fit into the muzzle of their gun for use as a bayonet; but such a fitting is bad for the gun, and well-directed stones are usually sufficient to keep the brutes at a safe distance. I remember on one occasion feeling smaller than I ever have done either before or since. We were walking along a narrow path through a wood. I was leading, when one of these big, yellow brutes dashed into the path in front of me, baying and showing his teeth. I halted to

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think, not liking to walk right into the animal's jaws, when a small child of about seven years old ran up to the dog, put its arms around its neck and led it away. Of course the child was one of the family and I was not. But still . . . !

We had a lot of really hard work breaking in the young seamen and drilling them aloft. The *Cruiser* in those days was no sinecure for her officers ; the men too had a strenuous time. At one time some of the young seamen tried malingering and complained of suffering from rheumatism, which is a difficult complaint to diagnose. Our surgeon was far too old a bird to be caught in that way, so he instituted a cure by means of a red-hot iron. However much a youngster might wish to keep up the deception, his pluck would forsake him when the red-hot iron was brought from the galley and handed to the surgeon; and just as it was about to touch his flesh, he would bound off the temporary operating table and never again appear to have his rheumatism cured.

Mosquitoes were at times a great nuisance. On one occasion I was bitten on one eyelid and had that eye completely closed, and just as it was getting convalescent I was bitten on the other eyelid. While in this partly blind condition a signal was brought to me to read, so I said to the man who brought it, " I can't read it, you read it out to me " ; to which he answered, " I can't read it either, sir, I am as ignorant as yourself ! "

On Christmas Day we had a novel experience. We were at Malta, and it was suspected that a good deal of liquor had been smuggled into the ship, so that, as there were some rather untamed youngsters

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on board, we were prepared for trouble. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon one or two showed signs of drink. We had a busy time for the next hour, the First Lieutenant on one side of the quarter-deck with the ship's police securing the culprits, while I held the other side. We filled the cells and the irons, and had to have recourse to lashings; in all we secured some seven or eight demons before order was restored.

It is extraordinary how difficult it was in those days to keep liquor out of a ship if the men were determined to smuggle it in. It almost seemed as if they adopted means similar to those of an Irish M.P. whose name I need not quote. This man was a brilliant orator but was apt to get drunk before important debates, so on one occasion, when his oratory was urgently required in the evening, Parnell had him locked up in his bedroom. While ruminating how to get his favourite drink he heard the Boots pass: he called to him, slipped a sovereign under the door and told him to go out and buy a long churchwarden pipe and a bottle of whisky. When the Boots returned, the M.P. told him to pass the stem of the pipe through the keyhole and pour the whisky into the bowl; so with his mouth to the pipe stem the M.P. was able to imbibe whisky until he was gloriously drunk.

In 1895 the Penjdeh incident occurred which brought us to the very brink of war with Russia. It was arranged that the *Cruiser* was to pay off and we were to commission the *Sterling Castle*, a fast merchant steamer, detailed for trade protection duties. I well remember the change in opinion that nearness to war produced in my estimate of the character of the

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officers with whom I was serving. While peace is secure we may like to serve under certain men who are genial, straightforward, and reasonably efficient; but when war looms up, geniality and such-like characteristics are thrown to the wind; and the sternest qualities, and the highest ability, are looked for and desired in those who are to guide the destiny of the ship or fleet in which we may be serving.

During this period of strained relations Captain Samuel Long, who was commanding the *Agamemnon* in China, was detailed to "dog" a Russian man-of-war. On entering a harbour in those pre-wireless days it was never known, until telegrams from the shore had been received on board, whether war had been declared or not. To enter a harbour in which a presumptive enemy had been anchored for some time was a risky proceeding, since she might have received news that war had been declared while your ship, arriving later, would be ignorant of the fact. The neutrality of a Chinese port was not likely to be regarded by the Russians if a distinct advantage in attack could be obtained by disregarding it. One day, when entering a harbour under these conditions, Long observed that the Russian was at battle quarters and of course went to action quarters also. That he was pre-eminently a cool man was shown by his sending for his second-in-command and saying: "If the Russian fires I am bound to be killed; you are then to put the helm over to starboard, ram and sink her at anchor." He then slowed to give the Russian every chance of firing before he himself was obliged to anchor.

It turned out that the Russian had received no news,

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but was in turn uncertain whether the *Agamemnon* might have obtained, while at sea, news of the declaration of war. Captain Long demanded and received an apology from the Russian Captain for having trained his guns on a British man-of-war in a neutral port.

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CHAPTER IX

TORPEDO-BOAT LIFE—ANNUAL MANŒUVRES OF 1887–1895

The annual manœuvres—Food at sea—A near thing—A new cure for sea-sickness—Wishbones—Comfort and discomfort—A home scene—Effect of want of sleep—Pills—Risking the boat—Jack's sound—A hair-raiser—A close shave—A night attack—Steeplechasing over a reef—An old-time dockyard matey—A succession of collisions—Balanced rudders—Accident to rudder—Manœuvre incidents—"Peter"—His mishaps—The sacrifice—A stokehold incident—A North Sea yarn.

FOR a month or six weeks in every summer after the year 1886 annual manœuvres were carried out by the Channel and Home Fleets; such extra ships and torpedo-boats as were necessary to augment the Fleets were specially commissioned for the period. The Lieutenants of the *Vernon* usually took command of some of the torpedo craft. It was my good fortune to command boats in 1887, 1892–93, 94–95.

He must be a dull dog indeed who cannot appreciate the joy that a first seagoing command is to a young officer. It is to him a small kingdom, and moreover a movable one, which has to be guided and handled under all conditions of sea, wind, and weather. True, there are inconvenient people in the shape of senior officers and Admirals, but they rarely interfere except to say when to sail and whither to go.

The day on which the torpedo-boats were commissioned for the manœuvres was a busy one. The men had to be told off to their different stations, provisions,

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stores, and ammunition taken in, the compasses adjusted, a steam trial carried out at sea, and a start made for the harbour where the flotillas were assembling. The first boat I commanded was No. 33, 125 feet in length, built by Messrs. Yarrow, with the maximum speed of 19 knots. She was a very bad boat to manœuvre, had a very large turning circle and refused to steer going astern; she was low forward and therefore a bad sea boat; but this gosling seemed indeed a cygnet to her proud Captain.

Life at sea in a torpedo-boat of this description was no joy. If there was no wind, or if the wind was astern, cinders from the funnel found their way everywhere. In fact one of the signs of an experienced Captain was to see the meat-safe of his boat wrapped round with a flag, otherwise the ham, which was the staple article of food, was blackened after every trip at sea.

In bad weather no food could be cooked at sea, so sufficient sandwiches to last for the whole trip were cut before going out of harbour, as these were easily eaten and always ready for consumption. In their manufacture the ham played an important part, not because ham sandwiches are a particularly pleasing form of diet, but a ham could be cooked ashore and lasted for some time in an edible condition.

Our cook was an able seaman who probably had never cooked before, unless, in his boyhood, he happened to have helped his mother in some inland cottage; and the signalman, who had never before done any waiting, acted as servant. The officers varied in numbers from year to year, and according to the size of the boat, but generally, in addition to the

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Captain, each boat carried two Sub-Lieutenants, or a Sub-Lieutenant and a warrant officer.

Immediately after commissioning in 1887 we left for Falmouth in No. 33, or to give her her full title, nearly as long as herself, "Her Majesty's Torpedo-boat Number Thirty-three," and the next morning we ran into a fresh head wind and a fair sea, when of course the boat became pretty lively. As usual on first going to sea after a spell in a harbour ship I felt rather sea-sick, so went below to get some ship's biscuit and cocoa. I was absent about three minutes, and when I again regained the deck, feeling horribly ill, I saw my noble command steering straight for a boat in the line parallel to ours! I bounded to the conning-tower and found the helmsman collapsed, dead sea-sick, across the steering wheel, and I only got the helm over just in time to save a collision. Queer to relate, the shock of this sudden predicament, and the consequent precipitate action, completely took away all feeling of sea-sickness for the rest of the time I was in that boat.

My dress at sea in bad weather was invariably a pair of sea boots, india-rubber short trousers, an india-rubber pea-jacket, and a bath towel wound round the neck with the jacket buttoned tightly over it. This was a fairly watertight kit, but after about two hours of really bad weather a gentle trickle could be felt about the breastbone, and then you knew the towel was soaked through and all watertightness for the cruise had vanished.

This mention of the breastbone reminds me of a tale of a friend, a man of amusing reminiscences, about life in Western Canada. In describing how at one

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ONE OF THE 125-FT. TORPEDO-BOATS. [*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

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place the men were commandeered to teach the ladies how to swim, he would lament pathetically, "The oldest lemon of the bunch always fell to my lot, and I used to have to stand for hours in the water supporting her with my hand under her clammy wishbone." Well, with us a wet wishbone meant being wet through—a not uncommon occurrence in these small vessels on the open sea. It is impossible, however, to describe the glow of contentment that pervaded each of us over a glass of whisky and a pipe when a wet cruise was over, the anchor down, the waterproofs off, and such dinner as could be got together had been eaten. Truly, never have I enjoyed myself so thoroughly as in the few hours after anchoring at the end of a bad-weather trip in a torpedo-boat. No one knows what comfort means till they have experienced real discomfort, this is particularly true as regards torpedo-boat life.

I shall never forget one morning in bad weather pushing open the slide of the wardroom hatch and looking down, when my eyes were met by a scene that almost beggars description. The boat was rolling heavily, a drawer had come out from under one of the bunks and its contents of shirts and other articles of clothing were upset on to the deck. There was a pond of about two inches of water covering the floor which rushed in waves, from side to side, with each roll of the boat. A book or two, a chart, and the table-cloth, which had been stupidly left on the table, were mixed with the clothing. The ham, our one staple article of food in bad weather, had broken from its moorings and was partially wrapped up in a sodden shirt; the cruet stand had broken the stem by which it usually was suspended, and added glass, oil, vinegar, and mus-

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tard to the salad; further, in addition to all this a joint of a steam pipe had started to blow, emitting a murky vapour which raised the temperature of the place to a tropical heat and fogged the stuffy air. And this, I thought, is "HOME!"

With only young officers under him, the Captain naturally always remained on deck at night at sea. The longest time that I ever was without sleep was four days and three nights, but on the fourth day I was very dozy. Once after a trip with some old monitors from Milford Haven to Falmouth I was sleeping the sleep of the just when a signal came to me to tell off a torpedo-boat for special duty. I was aroused and given the message and detailed off the right boat. Next morning I had no recollection of ever having given the order. I saw that the boat was absent and asked the reason, only to be told that I had given an order for her to undertake some special work. To this day I have no recollection of having been woke up and of giving the order.

One even more marked case of the same kind happened in a ship in which I served. In the manœuvres of 1888 I was in the *Northumberland*, the flagship of the Channel Fleet. It was in the early years of annual manœuvres and everyone was very much on the alert. Our Flag-Captain had been up for two nights, and then on the third night went to bed, as there was no chance of anything untoward happening. About midnight he rang his bell, sent for the officer of the watch, and told him to alter course with the Fleet for Achill Head, which was the very place the Fleet had left the day before. The officer of the watch thought it was part of some deep-

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laid plot and carried out the order. Next morning when the Flag-Captain went on the bridge, and looked at the chart to see the ship's position, he was aghast to find that the Fleet was 130 miles from where it ought to have been, having steamed sixty miles in the wrong direction, owing to his having given a wrong order in his sleep. So impressed was I by these two occurrences that, during the Great War, I never gave an order from my bed, but invariably got up and left the room where I slept before doing so. It was a great nuisance, as occasionally I was called as often as eight times in one night. But it was absolutely essential to ensure being thoroughly awake before dealing with signals in wartime.

In these comparatively small torpedo-boats the crews suffered equal if not greater discomfort than the officers, but they had their regular rest, and they liked the rather free-and-easy life away from the more monotonous routine of a large man-of-war. Although their quarters were restricted and the daily life in smoke, cinders, and coaling was not conducive to cleanliness, on official occasions, such as Sunday in harbour, they would turn out quite smart and respectable in appearance.

I remember one tale of these days of a boat after a bout of bad weather which deserves record as an insight into the private life of individuals in the late eighties. It happened that, during bad weather, a sea had got into the place where the medicine chest was kept. This chest was a plain box not in any way watertight, and therefore the contents became soaked with salt water. After arrival in harbour the Captain had the box up for inspection. The bandages and lint were wet but

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they could be dried, and the bottles also were all right; but the pills had suffered badly; so the sundry pulpy boxes with various-coloured contents were condemned to be thrown overboard. After the order had been given the gunner intervened and asked to be allowed to have them. The Captain consented, and the gunner leisurely opened all the boxes of pills compounded of different ingredients, and intended for various complaints, and emptied them into his broad horny palm, then consigning the damp mass to his trouser pocket, remarked, "They'll come in 'andy at 'ome."

Youth will ever look on the ship he commands as his own property and risk it as he would do if he were really the owner. The irresponsibility inherent in young men in their early twenties is an enormous asset in war, and should therefore not be unduly checked in peace-time. If a small vessel is lost it means of course some tens of thousands of pounds and perhaps a life or two, but the possession of young officers who do not sit down and think too much of risks (the older ones are the proper ones to do this) cannot be assessed in mere money, or even in a few lives; while the risk of a court martial in the background is sufficient to prevent mere stupidity. I remember on several occasions risking my torpedo-boat unjustifiably, and once a flotilla of four boats justifiably. . . . I wonder if these foolishnesses will interest others as much as they do me looking back through some forty years of after-experience.

Well, the first case was off Milford Haven. Just before leaving the *Vernon* to take command of *No. 25 T.B.*, the Commander said, chaffingly, "Don't go through Jack's Sound!" One day, while cruising

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with the boats, I remembered this and had a look at the chart of this passage which was sometimes known as the Devil's Passage. It was a bad place with sunken shoals and a strong cross-tide, few marks to guide one, and evidently the survey had not been very complete. Now, there was no earthly reason to go through this infernal place, except youth and a chaffing remark, but we went. When half-way through the whole offing ahead seemed to be nothing but rocks and shoals with the sea breaking on them. It was impossible to turn back, and to my horror I saw that the boat next astern was keeping dead astern of me although I was heading up to allow for the strong tide running on our beam. This meant that if the last two of the four boats did the same they must inevitably strike the sunken reef on our port side. However, my second in command of the flotilla, who was in the third boat on the line, was an officer of capacity and a good seaman. It was a great relief to see him head up parallel to me and so take the boat astern of him clear of the shoal. We got through all right, but when I appreciated how nearly I had taken the flotilla at a speed of fifteen knots on to a sunken reef in a three-knot cross-tide I determined to be somewhat less adventurous in future.

The second case was also at Milford. Some years later I found myself under the Captain of a reserve ship who knew nothing of torpedo-boats and was rather frightened of our risking too much and therefore having accidents, so I persuaded him to come away one night to see how easily the boats could be handled. The programme I arranged, without informing him, was to take him full speed up to Pembroke, keeping in the

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main channel, then turn hard a-port towards the dockyard wall, then to turn parallel to it, then hard a-port again out through the passage in the reef, and again hard a-starboard into the main channel. I calculated to make his hair stand on end, but before I had finished mine was standing higher than his, for just as we were swishing at eighteen knots on a dark night parallel to the dockyard wall, I saw the green-and-gold steamboat belonging to the Captain-Superintendent right ahead. Now I had been along the same route in daylight and all had been clear, but apparently this was the resting-place of this infernal steamboat after dark. On one side was the dockyard wall and moored on the other side were several yard craft. Over went the helm hard a-port to clear the boat, and then two seconds after back hard a-starboard to clear a lighter, then hard a-port to check her swing, midships again, and then hard a-port for the passage out through the reef—all these in about thirty seconds. I do not think we touched anything, but it was a near thing. There would have been no risk normally, but the unforeseen presence of the steamboat moored in the narrow channel might have led to disaster.

One other foolishness and my confessions will be finished. One day returning to harbour rather late, after the whole flotilla had been exercising firing torpedoes, I found the basin at North Corner in Portsmouth Dockyard strewn with boats heading in all directions. The *Glatton* was moored alongside the coaling jetty doing a full-speed trial, and the wash of her propellers was setting dead across the entrance of the dock into which the boats were hoping to moor up, with the result that the place was fairly lively with

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torpedo-boats, their boat-hooks, fenders, and expletives. Of course with the wash setting across the entrance from left to right, in order to enter the dock it was necessary to head well on to the wall on the left side of the entrance, so that the wash would carry the boat sideways while she shot into the entrance. Moreover, a good speed was necessary so that the whole length of the boat could be shot in while the drifting was taking place across the narrow entrance.

Like a young fool I thought I could succeed where others had failed and so tried to shoot in. Making a mental calculation as to the distance to the left of the entrance to steer, I headed right at the wall. When I got close to the wall to my horror I found that not only was the wash setting *across* the entrance, but also, for a short distance off it, it was setting straight *on to* the wall, and when we arrived at this spot the boat began to travel at a rate of some fourteen instead of ten knots dead at the wall. It looked as if a bad smash was unavoidable. It was too late to do anything except to reverse the engines, but before they could move I knew the crash would come, and I was just turning to look astern to save the painful sight of my bow collapsing, when we entered the cross-wash, which fortunately was stronger than I had anticipated, and we shot clean into the dock. Pure luck. The Captain of the Steam Reserve who was watching gave me a fatherly rubbing down afterwards, which I fully deserved; he was, however, not entirely uncomplimentary, probably remembering the sins of his own youth.

I got through my first command, handling the boat gaily without a scratch until the very last time that I touched her telegraphs. We were berthing in a

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dock for paying off, and my boat was one of the last to go in. We went in quite gently, but to check her, and stop her dead, I put the telegraph to "slow astern"; the engine-room artificer then made his only mistake that commission and put the engine to "slow ahead." I noticed his error of course at once, and to stop the boat from colliding I put the telegraph to "full speed astern." In the engine-room they went full speed ahead and the boat bounded like a young antelope into the stern of the next one ahead. I learned a lesson never forgotten; namely, that should the man in the engine-room make a mistake in working the engines, never to move the telegraph from "slow" to "full speed" without first going through "stop." This gives the engineer a fresh start, when probably he will correct his previous error.

At the close of the 1887 manœuvres I had three other torpedo-boats under my command to take part in a combined attack on the Fleet anchored at Spithead. I had orders to attack from the Solent. It was natural to expect to find the Needles entrance patrolled so that timely alarm of our approach could be given to the Fleet. In those days mere alarm was sufficient to justify the umpire in placing torpedo-boats out of action. It therefore seemed to me that the best chance of success lay in avoiding the Needles entrance and coming close round Hurst Castle point between the fort and the Shingles shoal. I called a council of war at sea on board my boat to discuss the matter. All the three other Captains were against my proposal, considering it too risky to attempt the Hurst passage as the lighthouse did not show a light in the direction of our approach and there were no other lights to guide

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us. However, I decided to carry out the attack in this way and dissolved the only council of war I ever called. Always after this I looked on them as a waste of time, and as merely affording an excuse for inaction.

We got round Hurst Point all right and went at full speed up the Solent. In a night attack it is most important to show no lights on board of the attacking boats; only a dimly lighted compass inside the conning tower could be used, which was unfortunate as these compasses were shielded by the iron of the conning tower and were therefore never very reliable. About 10.30 p.m. I saw a tree a short distance ahead of the boat. Over went the helm, but, bump, bump, bump, we went as we steeplechased over a shoal. "I hear the water rushing in forward," said the coxswain, who was inside the conning tower; but as we did not seem to be going down by the bows I held on at full speed and found the rushing of water was all imagination on his part. The reason of our grounding was that the conning tower compass had put us a little inside, instead of outside, Egypt Point off Cowes, and that when nearing the land we had, without appreciating the fact, run into a low-lying mist which hid the shore till we were close to it. Two of the other boats were stranded on the shoal till next highwater. The boat next astern of me bumped over in the same way that we did, and on we two went and carried out our attack. The only other excitement that evening was nearly splitting in half one of the measured-mile buoys which fortunately was silhouetted against one of the search-lights of the Fleet just in time to avoid smashing into it. I expected to get into trouble for losing two boats, but with the luck that attended most of my torpedo-boat

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escapades the authorities gave me *kudos* instead of a reprimand.

My propeller was a bit bent and when revolving it hit the sternpost of the boat, so into the harbour I went and worried the dockyard authorities to get it put right so as to be ready to take part in another boat attack the same evening. They were willing enough, but I tumbled up against a really good specimen of the old-time "dockyard matey," the sort of man who never did a bit more work than he was absolutely obliged to do. Naval officers in the eighties of last century were always inveighing against the slothfulness of the dockyard mechanics, because their listlessness and idleness ran up the cost of defects and delayed the completion of the ships undergoing refit. This mechanic did not appear till 9 a.m. instead of 6 a.m. as he should have done, he then stood on the jetty looking on to the boat; so I asked him when he proposed to start work, to which he replied that he had merely come to look at the job to see what sort of one it was, and proposed shortly to go and get some tools. As my boat had to take part in an attack that night I was rather riled and at once went and interviewed the Captain of the Steam Reserve, who began to shake things up. In about an hour my friend reappeared, but when he began to work found that he had brought the wrong tools. Again I went to the Captain of the Steam Reserve, and as a matter of fact I went to him four times in all that forenoon to get the work urged on, until that kindly official was nearly as tired of me as I was of his matey. At last I got desperate and said: "Look here, for goodness' sake dig out, I have got to take part in an attack to-night." He quietly laid

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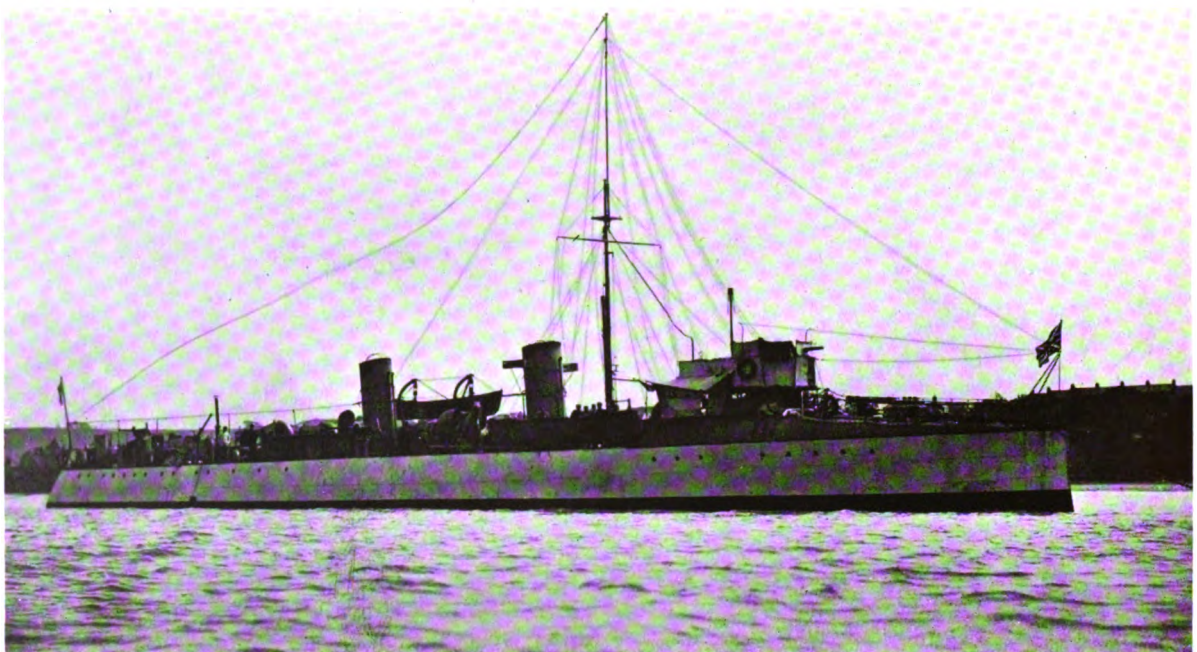

THE EARLIEST OF THE DESTROYERS. [*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

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down his tools and surveyed me carefully, and said: "Well, all I can say is, I'll be d——d if you will." A final visit to the Steam Reserve office and my friend was marched outside the dockyard gates and left sitting on his tool-box in the road. His statement, however, was correct, and although, all too late, I had five men and two charge-hands on the work, as we were steaming out of Portsmouth harbour we saw the rockets go up which heralded the finish of the attack.

It has not been the fortune of many Naval officers to have four collisions in one passage between the entrance of Portsmouth Harbour and Southsea Pier, but this befell me in this wise. The first year that I commissioned *No.* 81 *T.B.* (the old *Swift*), which was the largest and fastest torpedo-boat then in the Navy, it was discovered that her steering engine was defective, and that it would take five or six hours to replace the erring part. Now, it is a tradition in the Navy never to let anything, except the absolute impossible, interfere with the execution of an order. Excuses are apt to be the offspring of inclination and are never looked on favourably by those in high command. We had been ordered to be at a certain rendezvous next day, which necessitated leaving the day before. We had, moreover, a full day's programme in the way of steaming trials, compass adjustments, etc., to get through before we could sail. If we had waited six hours for the steering engine to be put right it would have been impossible to get our trials completed and to sail that day, so I had the hand steering gear connected up instead of the steam gear, and left the jetty with a light heart to carry out our steam trials.

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As we cleared the entrance I increased speed to twelve knots, and in altering course to clear a sailing barge the helm took charge, wrenched the wheel out of the helmsman's hands, and round we waltzed, just taking the boom topping lift out of the barge as we shaved her stern. By reversing the engines we avoided grounding and the boat was again brought back to her course, and I put two men on the wheel. A regatta was taking place off Southsea Pier, and in trying to avoid a small boat again the helm took charge and went over, the hands of both men this time being thrown off the wheel, and round we went, fouling the oars of another boat. Again we straightened up with the propellers, but before we got clear of the Regatta twice more we danced round. The consternation and execration of the judges, umpires, and crews can well be imagined at this gratuitous pantomimic performance. Everything they said was probably strictly true, but it was really in no way my fault. When we got into fairly clear water I carried out some trials and found that so long as we only steamed at eight knots one man could steer the boat; but the moment we increased to ten knots, then the helm was apt to take charge and throw even two men off the hand wheel. The explanation was simply that the rudder was overbalanced.

Now, with the ordinary rudder, as everyone knows, if the tiller is pressed over to the left the rudder swings over behind the boat to the right and then the water rushing past the boat presses against the rudder and tries to push it back again in line with the boat's keel. If the tiller is kept held over it is this pressure that forces the boat's stern to the left so that her head appears to go to the right. In big ships and fast boats the force

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required to put over the tiller becomes really great; so some genius invented the principle of pivoting the rudder a little distance from its front edge instead of actually on the front edge as was usually the case. With such a rudder when the tiller is put over to the left the rear part of the rudder still goes to the right, but the front edge of the rudder goes to the left, and the pressure of the water on the hinder part tries to bring the rudder amidships and the pressure on the foremost part tries to press it still further over; these two pressures largely balance each other, so that little force is required to put the helm over; but the whole pressure on the rudder still forces the stern of the ship over to the left. Now in *No. 81* the rudder was pivoted too far back, therefore the front part became too large in area and the tendency of the water that was being shot astern by her large propeller was to push the rudder right over as soon as it was put over a few degrees; this tendency was so great that it was impossible with the hand gear to hold the wheel against it.

The trials were concluded with the helm nearly amidships, and when these were over we returned at the safe but funereal speed of eight knots; and could not help noticing, rather resentfully, the pointed and ostentatious precautions taken by craft of all sorts to keep out of our way.

During one annual manœuvre we were based on Kingstown and one night were sent to attack some ships that we believed to be in Holyhead harbour. When we arrived we found that it was empty. While returning, my boat, *No. 81* again, steered badly, and I found it most difficult to keep a steady course. Next

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morning I found all the plating stripped off the rudder and there was nothing left except the bare skeleton of ribs in all their nakedness. As a matter of fact we had a second very small rudder working in conjunction with the main rudder, so we were not helpless. I tried all sorts of dodges to make the main rudder efficient, but they all failed. Then I tried to dock at Dublin; the dock there was plenty large enough, but being an Irish dock its lock was too short to admit the boat. So, the manœuvres being ended, there was nothing for it but to get back to Portsmouth under the little rudder. We had no trouble in the open sea and got on well. The boat was fairly old and had a good many defects, and I remember going up the Solent with both feed pipes to the boilers wrapped round with canvas and spun yarn to make them reasonably efficient and enable them to suck water. About 10 p.m. we arrived at Spithead, and with the optimism of youth I thought I could get in and up to North Corner with only the little rudder. But alas and alack! entering on the last of the flood we were swept over towards Gosport, and before I could correct our course we were taken by the tide across the bows of a yacht, carried away her bowsprit and did some damage to our upper works. The Admiralty were kind and condoned the accident, being, I think, rather relieved that we had not come to worse grief on the passage over. A similar accident happened to the rudder of the first and original *Dreadnought* during her experimental cruise, about which more anon.

The manœuvres of those days were not without their amusing incidents. The captain of one torpedo-boat hemmed in at Holyhead landed part of her

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engines and hid them in a hayloft and so prevented her being used by the other side. Threats of the direst penalties failed to effect the restoration of the part till after the manœuvres were ended. Another enterprising captain, knowing that the enemy's ships were anchored in a certain harbour with the entrance thoroughly guarded, landed a torpedo and with one other man took it over-land to the beach opposite the enemy. He then hired a rowing boat, towed the torpedo close to the enemy's ship, and started the engine and torpedoed the ship. I am sorry to say that the Captain of the ship attacked was so enraged at being torpedoed that he put the officer in cells and fed him on bread and water.

The captains of the different boats varied considerably in skill of handling their vessels. The majority were good at the art, being young and having nerve and judgment, and their common sense prevented risks developing into accidents, but one or two of them were useless and even dangerous. One in particular was a byword. Whenever his boat was about to move in the dock where the others were moored there was a general flutter; the crews of all the other boats provided fenders and boat-hooks and stood ready for any eventuality. As soon as the word went round that "Peter," as he was called for short, was about to move, the captains of the other boats came on deck provided with terse sentences invented in their leisure moments to express their opinions of his skill at manœuvring.

One day, when anchored in a roadstead, Peter's boat dragged her anchor and fouled another boat, which of course resulted in the second boat dragging

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also. After having asked Peter politely several times to take his boat away, the captain of the fouled boat told Peter that if he did not get his boat clear he would come on board, take charge, and do it himself. A more deadly insult could not well be imagined. Peter in an access of frenzy rushed forward shouting (goodness knows why) " It is a matter of life and death," swung an axe over his head with some vacant idea of cutting his chain cable and brought that deadly weapon down on the Gunner's toe ! ! Which, needless to say, only added to the confusion.

Poor Peter, I wonder where he is now. He quite mistook his vocation in life when he entered the Navy. No better-intentioned person ever lived, but he was not born to be a sailor. He developed a religious mania which was always leading him into trouble by creating impossible situations with his superior officers. One jovial messmate tried to divert Peter's mania of attempting to convert his seniors into the right paths by sacrificing himself. He begged Peter to take him in hand and convert him from his evil ways. Peter eagerly took him on. Occasionally there would be lapses, generally of strong language, when Peter's conversion regime verged on the limit of endurance. Then Peter would regretfully say that he feared the case was hopeless, that nothing more could be done, and that he would have to abandon further attempts. " The Sacrifice " would then become penitent and say : " Now, I do call that unkind to give me up just as I really was seeing the error of my ways ; do try once more." So Peter would buckle to again and become engrossed in the hope of converting the sacrifice, and so would be rendered comparatively

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harmless to the remainder of his messmates for a further period of time.

Many heroic deeds have been done in the stokeholds of torpedo-boats of which little has been heard. Full-speed steaming in what we used to call "a sardine box with a thousand horse-power to drive it" not infrequently led to accidents which called for the display of discipline and self-sacrifice. On one occasion a boat was passing its trials for acceptance into the Navy, when during the run the forced-draught fan stopped, a back draught came down the funnel, the draught plate jammed and flames spread back from the furnaces into the stokehold round the legs of the stokers. At this critical moment one youngster made for the ladder. The chief stoker in charge, an old veteran who cared little for either fire or steam, stretched out a hand and pulled him down into the inferno, saying calmly: "If ever I catch you leaving the stokehold without my permission I will break your blooming head." So impressed was the representative of the contracting firm with the conduct of the man that he bought the man's discharge from the Navy and gave him charge of the stokers in all the experimental runs of the vessels built by his firm.

But the real gem which shows to perfection the callous indifference of the men below to risks and dangers is the story that has been told before, but which deserves repetition, of two stokers in a North Sea destroyer scrap during the War. It had been quite an exciting little affair—full-speed, gunfire, and shells exploding near the boat. When it was over and the telegraphs rang down half-speed, up flicked the stokehold hatches for the grimy, sweating men below to get

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a breath of cool air, and two swarthy heads appeared from two hatches facing each other. One of the officers thinking he would like to hear a stokehold opinion of the small action, and how the noise and absence of knowledge of what was going on affected those below, walked slowly forward close past the men. All he heard was: "Well, all I can say, Bill, is that he ought to have married the girl." Evidently the fight had been to them only an unwelcome interruption of an interesting conversation about current local events.

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CHAPTER X

1886–1900

H.M.S. "VERNON" AND H.M.S. "NORTHUMBERLAND"

Promotion in the Navy—Promotion billets—The Psalmist's advice—A close shave for promotion—I join the torpedo line—Admiralty cheeseparing—Cheated out of pay—I receive instruction in the *Vernon*—Langston Harbour operation—Smoke making—Diving—Foul below water—A last resource—Diving under difficulties—Professor Haldane—The diving committee—Decompression—Effect of gas—Just too late—Admiral Hewitt—Jock Baird—The Channel Squadron—Annual manœuvres—Bad strategy—Sir Michael's escape—The proper fighting formation—John Thursfield—Electric lighting—The fair American's story—Prince George—The effect of the sea on an at home—Copenhagen—A Royal gathering—The Kaiser and the *Caesar*.

UP to the middle of last century the quickest way to obtain promotion from Lieutenant to Commander was by becoming a Flag-Lieutenant. In those days when an Admiral hauled down his flag after a period of important command, his Flag-Lieutenant automatically received his promotion.

This was a thoroughly bad custom. In the first place, the main qualification for appointment as Flag-Lieutenant was that of being a relation either of the Admiral or some friend of his; and secondly, the duties of Flag-Lieutenant afforded but little education to an officer in sea duties other than a knowledge of Fleet manœuvres.

Promotion by merit is the real basis of efficiency in any service, and in the Navy it is fundamental. Ever since the abolition of Flag promotions the selection of officers for promotion has been most carefully and

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thoroughly carried out; in fact, as the time for the half-yearly promotions approaches, the Lords of the Admiralty concerned in the selection have a most difficult and worrying time. It is easy enough to sift down the names until there remain only about double the number that can possibly be promoted, then the difficulty begins and worry ensues. In olden times selection for promotion was made fairly easy by promoting those who had no black marks against them, now the difficulty lies in discriminating between the virtues of those eligible.

Promotion from Naval Cadet to Midshipman is automatic, depending only on the result of the final examination on passing out of Dartmouth. Promotion from Midshipman to Lieutenant depends primarily on the classes obtained in the five examinations—seamanship, mathematics, gunnery, torpedo, and pilotage. All those who fail to do well have to serve at sea as Sub-Lieutenants for varying periods, the actual extent of time served before promotion depending on the reports received from the ships in which they serve. The promotion from Lieutenant to Lieutenant-Commander is automatic, by seniority only. The great fence where most of the field fall is the promotion from Lieutenant-Commander to Commander. The whole period of service as Lieutenant and Lieutenant-Commander should be lived in one sustained effort to do well and merit early promotion; the young officer should select one of the special branches, namely, gunnery, torpedo, signals, or navigation, pass the necessary qualifying examinations and attain proficiency in it, as well as in the duties of an executive officer in a seagoing ship. There are a few "promotion billets,"

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such as the Senior Staff Officer and Senior Experimental Officer of the gunnery and torpedo schools, but to hold one of these an officer must be of outstanding merit in his special branch.

The Royal Yacht also carries a special promotion for a Sub-Lieutenant and Lieutenant. There is no harm in this, as it enables selections to be made, if excuse is necessary, for officers whom it may be desirable to promote for reasons other than outstanding ability as judged by the normal standard. Flagship officers of the requisite seniority stand well for promotion, firstly, because if they were not of marked ability they would not have been selected to serve in a flagship, and secondly, their virtues are exhibited immediately under the eye of the Admiral. One law should always be observed, namely, that no officer should be promoted unless recommended by the Admiral commanding the Fleet in which he is serving.

In spite of all endeavours and precautions promotion must be somewhat of the nature of a lottery to those who are ranged along the lower border line of merit. One such sufferer applied in despair for an appointment to a ship on the West Coast of Africa—a station little sought after. He pointed out that according to the Psalmist promotion came neither from the East nor from the West nor yet from the South, so therefore it was as well to get due south of the Admiralty and hope for it to come from the North! The half-yearly promotions are generally colloquially referred to as the " half-yearly jars."

The following tale shows how promotion can be

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almost attained and yet lost at the post. Many years ago after the list of promotions to Commander had been sent on to the First Lord of the Admiralty for his final approval, the First Sea Lord sent for, and retrieved it just before signature, erased one name and inserted another. The man whose name was erased was never afterwards promoted. Five minutes of time made all the difference to his service career.

Everyone must appreciate how difficult it is to select officers for the duties of a higher rank merely from their service in a lower one. The qualities required in a Lieutenant are totally different to those necessary to an Admiral, yet they are to some extent those required for the intermediate ranks of Commander and Captain. The only rank which really serves as a period of training for Admiral is that of Captain of a ship, and for this reason early promotion among Lieutenants and Commanders should be encouraged so that they may remain a long time on the Captain's list. When I first joined the Navy, Captains were serving for eighteen years. This excellent custom was, however, somewhat marred by the Captain having to endure long periods of enforced half-pay. The regulations insisted that if a Post-Captain were not employed for seven years after promotion he was to be retired. In one case, in the days when ships in commission were few, a frigate had to be especially commissioned to save the retirement of a Captain who had been unemployed for six years after his promotion.

Promotion from Commander to Captain is again one of selection, but from Captain to Admiral it is by seniority only. This ensures a greater independence than would be the case if a Captain were always trim-

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ming his sails with a view to getting early promotion ; moreover, it leaves him free to work for the promotion of the officers serving under him instead of merely pushing his own interests.

I elected to join the torpedo branch of the Navy if they would have me. The only other rival line was the gunnery—but in those days the latter had no attraction for me: the requisite was chiefly a loud voice to drill a battery or battalion. Real scientific gunnery was not then in existence, when ranges of 1,300 yards only were thought of, and there seemed to be small prospects of any great development ; whereas electricity, then more or less in its infancy, gave promise of great possibilities in its application to Naval purposes, although in those days the only electrical appliances on board ship were electric bells and weird dynamos to supply electricity for the search-lights.

After a year in the *Cruiser* I was sent home to join Greenwich College for the qualifying course for Torpedo Lieutenant. At this period, and indeed for several years afterwards, there was a spirit of meanness pervading the Admiralty—every plea afforded by the regulations was taken advantage of for depriving officers and men of their hard-earned pay. The following is a fair example. On arrival in England all who had served abroad were allowed a fortnight's leave for each year of foreign service ; if, however, an officer came home to take up a home appointment he was not allowed to take his leave, but had to join his new appointment at once. This was a wise provision, as after all the officer had come home to do work and not to go on leave. In my case, having served over a

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year abroad, I was qualified for leave; but I had first to join the college at Greenwich. That establishment, however, was closed and was not due to reopen for a fortnight. The Admiralty decided I was to be put on half-pay for this fortnight, in spite of the fact that I was qualified to receive a fortnight's leave and also that it was absolutely impossible to take up my appointment to an establishment whose doors were locked. Some Admiralty clerk put three pounds ten shillings into the pocket of the Government and I lost a fortnight's full-pay service. Another somewhat similar case happened to me some years later. In the 1895 manœuvres, when I was a Lieutenant of just under twelve years' seniority, I was appointed in command of *No.* 94 *T.B.* While still in command of her I was promoted to Commander, so I applied to be paid as Commander and was refused on the plea that I was appointed to my command when a Lieutenant. This was reasonable. In a few days' time, when I had served twelve years as Lieutenant, I applied to be paid as a Lieutenant of over twelve years' seniority, which meant half a crown a day extra. I was refused this time because I was a Commander and therefore could never have become a Lieutenant of twelve years' seniority. This is a good example of how the regulations were used and twisted round always to the disadvantage of the officer. The Admiralty was at that time a byword in the Navy for meanness and unfairness.

Things have improved vastly of late years in this respect, and the Admiralty may now be looked on as honest as regards the pay of officers and men.

The Greenwich course meant another spell of

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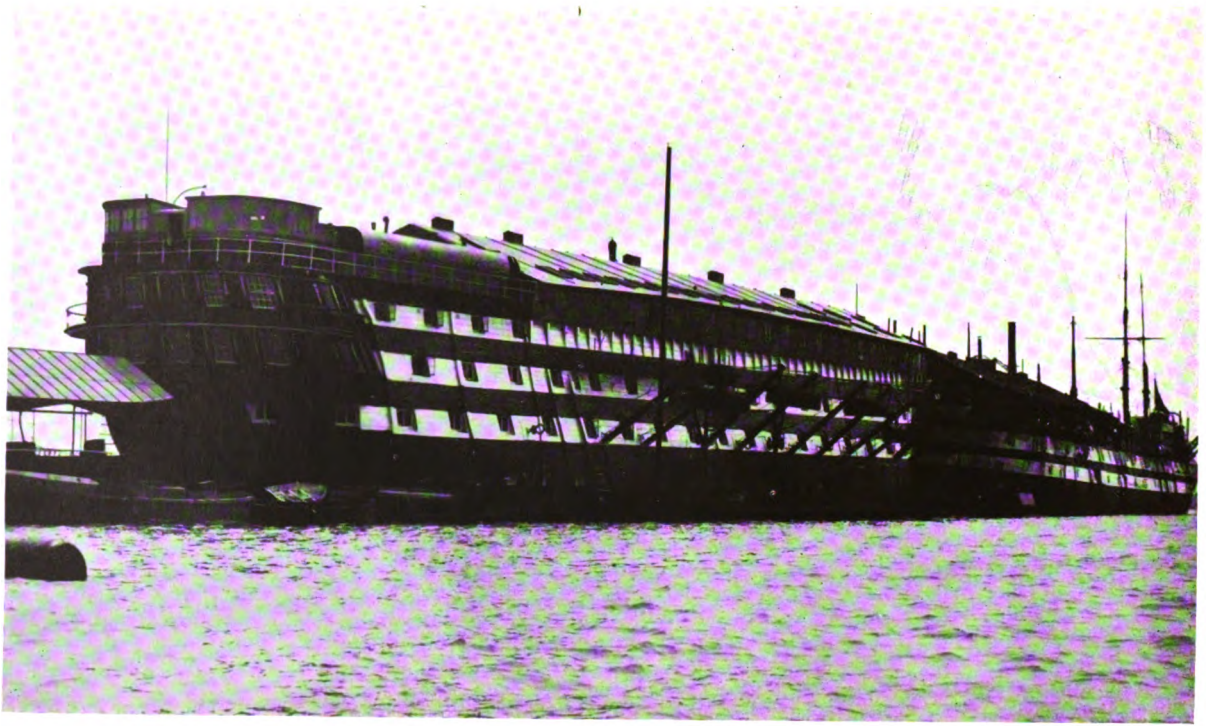

H.M.S. "VERNON."
The Torpedo School of the Royal Navy.

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hard work. Physics and chemistry, however, provided a welcome relaxation from mathematics. Having passed the necessary examination, I joined the *Vernon* and there went through a course of practical torpedo work and enjoyed a thoroughly good open-air life.

Looking back on the torpedo work of those days, the appliances seem to have been extraordinarily crude. Yet how seriously we took them and how thoroughly we believed in their value in war! Beyond doubt had the country gone to war at that time the mines and torpedoes of that day would have been used with effect, although immeasurably inferior to those of the present day.

One of the most elementary appliances was the hand charge. This was a charge of one pound of gun-cotton, fitted with a detonator connected to one end of a length of instantaneous fuse which was provided with a pistol at the other end; it was for use in small boats when fighting small boats. The charge could be thrown on to the opposing boat, and the moment it landed, the pistol was supposed to be fired and the charge detonated. It was necessary to make the charge watertight in case it dropped into the water. In the early days this was effected by dropping the charge, detonators and all, into boiling pitch and pulling it out again before it got hot enough to explode the detonator and gun-cotton! The operator in the meantime ducked behind a steel plate in case the charge detonated accidentally. Only one man in ten was temperamentally fit to be entrusted to use a hand charge in actual fighting, and even with a class of seamen, when there was no hurry or excite-

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ment, I have seen a nervous man throw the pistol and hold hard on to the charge. Goodness only knows what would have happened in the excitement of a fight.

The "outrigger charge" was another weapon of doubtful value even in those days. Two forty-foot spars with charges at their ends were carried one on each side of an eight-knot open steamboat. The chances of getting near enough to a ship to explode them against her side were remote, but still there was a chance. Quick-firing guns were in their early infancy, so that the result of an attack by a number of boats lay in the lap of the gods.

Accidents were extraordinarily few considering the amount of pioneer work that had to be carried out, and the escapes at times were miraculous. I once saw an energetic officer cut through a disk of gun-cotton that had been submerged, regardless of the fact that he cut through at the same time two fulminate of mercury detonators, which were apt to explode if they were at all roughly handled.

A part of our duties was to instruct the seamen's classes, take them through a practical course and examine them at the end of their period of training. One answer in an examination paper became historic. The question was rather a foolish one, namely, "What is electricity?" The answer was, "Electricity is a subtle and imponderous fluid invented by Captain Fisher and perfected by Captain Wilson." Local prophets were certainly not without honour in the *Vernon*!

Among other diversions we carried out some joint manœuvres with the Army at Langston Harbour, the

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Army mining and defending, while we attacked and destroyed the mines. I had to provide and work six smoke rafts to cover our operations. No one knew how to make smoke, I least of all, but kelp[1] soaked with heavy oil well wetted seemed on trial to fulfil the requirements. The rafts did well at first, but blazed towards the end of the operations, with the result that the Army reported that the flaming beacons provided by the Navy lit up the operations well. This was rather a libel on my smoke rafts!

As usual there was a lesson to be learned from the operations. One umpire reported that the defence were occupied more with firing at the fires on the smoke rafts than at the boats cutting the mine cables. I never forgot this, and more than once during the Great War provided the Germans with something harmless but very apparent to fire at, and so attracted their attention away from objects which I was anxious they should not attack.

While we were in the *Vernon* those among us who were physically adapted went through a course of diving. Diving in a diver's dress at the bottom of the sea can be a most delightful or a most miserable pastime. Given warm, clear water, not too deep, with a bright sun to illumine the bottom, great pleasure can be derived from a ramble of exploration or work on a wreck; but cold, deep water, with soft mud and inky darkness, make diving miserable.

With ordinary precaution no danger attaches to straightforward diving, but certain rules have to be observed by the diver, and rule number one is when in difficulty or doubt to sit down and calmly think things

[1] A species of seaweed.

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out. Hurry or excitement is apt to accelerate the action of the heart, and this is apt to increase unduly the rate of breathing, with the result that reason becomes clouded.

Probably the experience most trying to a young diver is to find his air pipe or breast rope foul of some obstruction below water. The air pipe conveys the air for him to breathe and the breast rope is the sole reliable link between him and his friends above. When a diver finds himself thus caught up he should slowly take the breast rope and pipe in his hands and follow them back to the place where they are foul, when it will generally be found an easy matter to clear them. If, however, they are badly fouled he must sit down and think the matter over quietly. Should it be impossible to clear them, as would be the case if a heavy weight which could not be lifted had fallen across them, then heroic measures are necessary. The first thing that he should do is to cut the breast rope and knot the two parts clear of the obstruction; then, if he is getting plenty of air and there is no hurry, he should make the signal for the slate and write down what is the matter and what he is going to do, and then give four pulls on the rope which shows he is preparing to come up. When this has been answered, he should make the "one pull" signal to be pulled up, and when he feels the rope tighten he must take his life in his hands and cut through the air pipe. It is then a case of quick work to get him close to the boat and his helmet opened before he is suffocated. Only once have I been foul below, and that was when diving near the *Vernon* in Portsmouth Harbour; the tide fell and her chain cable got across my pipe and breast rope. Luckily I

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A DIVER FULLY RIGGED.

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discovered it before the tide had fallen too much and was able to scrape away the mud and pull them clear, but the first feeling of being foul was distinctly objectionable.

On several occasions I have found diving of service. Off Scarborough in 1887 all the divers of the Fleet with one exception failed us; and that exception and I had to dive to pick up the ends of the cables that had parted. At Gibraltar, while destroying an old wreck off Europa Point, I was able to carry out some interesting experiments on the effect of gun-cotton explosions on the hull of a ship below water. The water was beautifully clear and it was possible to see and sketch the vessel before and after each explosion.

The worst diving I ever had was the last time that I ever dived, which was alongside a wreck on the coast of Crete outside the harbour of Kandia. There was a good sea breaking on the beach with a mean depth of water of only about 8 feet; but the depth of water varied between about 5 and 11 feet, as the seas rolled in, so that at times I was dry to below the shoulders and at others had four feet of water over me; the result was that I was lifted up and bumped down alternately so violently that work was almost impossible.

While diving a diver should never bend down so that his head is below his hips, otherwise air accumulates in the seat of his dress and he is apt to turn upside down and be blown up to the surface. Once when Naval divers were diving in a wreck one man got blown up against the underside of a deck, and had to stay there for some six or eight hours till the tide slacked

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sufficiently for another diver to go down and assist to put him on his legs again! For in such a position a man is as helpless as a beetle on its back. It is a cardinal rule never to stop pumping air until the diver has been brought up to the surface and is inside the boat, however long he may be hung up below water, for a man may live for days below water if his dress is undamaged and he keeps his head.

Many years after my course in the *Vernon*, in 1904–5, Professor J. K. Haldane was helping me over a problem connected with the purification of air in submarine boats, when conversation turned on diving, and how the pressure owing to the depth of water affected divers by making them breathe quickly. He at once seized on this point and argued that it could not be mere pressure that affected the man, but in all probability it was the impurity of the air inside the helmet that accounted for the accelerated heart action. I was so impressed with this point that on my return to the Admiralty I asked Sir John Fisher to appoint a committee under the Captain of the *Excellent* with Haldane and myself members to investigate the whole question of deep-sea diving. Thanks to Professor Haldane and his co-helper, Professor Leonard Hill, several problems were solved and our difficulties explained. It was conclusively proved that it was primarily foul air, and not mere pressure owing to depth of water, that caused panting, rapid heart action and consequent inability to work; also it was shown that our air pumps were too leaky to supply a thorough change of air to men diving in deep water. Our pumps were improved and a marked improvement in deep diving was obtained.

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There still remained the difficulty of " decompression." A diver when in deep water is breathing air that has been compressed considerably by the pressure of the surrounding water. It is of course common knowledge that the deeper the water the greater is the pressure exerted on any object immersed. In fact every single thing at the bottom of the sea is compressed in every direction by the weight of the water above it. The air therefore in a diver's dress is pressed on by the surrounding water until it is at the same pressure as the water itself. Now, if air is compressed, more air is contained in a cubic inch than there was in a cubic inch at the surface of the water. Each lungful that is breathed in contains compressed air. This will expand again to its normal extent if the pressure exerted on it by the water is removed. When diving at a depth the blood takes this compressed air from the lungs and carries it through the heart and on to every tissue of the body. The blood becomes in a condition similar to soda water in a closed bottle, namely saturated with compressed air. In the case of soda water when the cork is removed the pressure is immediately relieved, the gas is allowed to expand and to bubble up through the water. It is easy to see, therefore, that if a diver whose blood has been saturated with compressed air comes suddenly from a considerable depth up to the surface, the pressure on his body is suddenly released and the air in his blood expands with the result that froth takes the place of normal blood.

The same effect is observed when compressed air is supplied to men making tunnels. A compression

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chamber is always supplied in connection with such work. This is a closed room pumped up to the same pressure as that at which the men are working. On leaving their work the men pass into this chamber and remain there while the pressure is being gradually reduced to that of the normal atmosphere, so as to allow their circulation to gradually give up the compressed air and so return to its normal condition.

In diving, decompression had always been practised by insisting on the diver coming up very slowly and making frequent halts on the way to the surface. During our investigations one scientist had the brilliant inspiration that the diver could at once come up to half the depth at which he was diving, since in so doing each bubble of gas would only expand to double its compressed size. This modification was of great importance, since it was no longer necessary to waste time in halts between the full depth and half depth. It was only really necessary that each successive stop should be half-way between the last stop and the surface; or if diving in forty fathoms of water the stops should be at twenty, ten, and five fathoms, a sufficient length of stop being given at each of these to get the blood into a normal condition. All these theories were proved by being practised on goats in a compression chamber. The net result of the work of the committee was that whereas twenty-five fathoms had been looked on as a maximum for diving, we were able at once to increase this to forty fathoms.

In one of the last experiments that were carried out a goat died unexpectedly, and a post-mortem

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A DIVER ABOUT TO DESCEND.

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revealed that, being a fat goat, compressed air had remained in some of the fatty tissues longer than was the case with normal goats. This pointed to the fact that stout divers should be allowed a longer decompression time than skinny ones. This information was telegraphed to Plymouth where some experimental deep-sea diving was being carried out; but by extraordinary bad luck the information arrived just after the death of a rather stout diver had occurred from this very cause.

I have never known of a case of sharks attacking divers—but octopi occasionally twine round their legs. The proper treatment for so hostile an act is for the diver to put his hand inside the octopus's capacious mouth, seize his internal organs and turn him inside out. I believe this quite defeats the animal and that his suckers release at once.

At the end of the practical course I returned to Greenwich for an advanced course. This was against the wish of the Captain and Commander of the *Vernon*, who told me I would thereby forfeit the first seagoing appointment. However, I was determined not to lose the last chance of theoretical instruction. I took up rigid dynamics and differential equations, also practical physics and quantitative analysis of some explosives and water analysis. However, bowing to some extent to the wishes of the *Vernon*, I crammed a three months' course into six weeks. I lost the first seagoing vacancy for a Torpedo Lieutenant, but shortly after was appointed to the *Northumberland*, the flagship of the Channel Squadron, just at the time when a change of Admirals was taking place. Admiral Sir W. Hewett remained in command for a

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month after my joining before being relieved by Sir John Baird.

Billy Hewett, as he was affectionately called, was a very popular officer; he was a V.C., had a bluff manner and said what he thought. He was not a very proficient French scholar, which accounted for an amusing incident at a dance given by the *Northumberland* at a foreign port. A little time after the guests had arrived the upper deck was crowded with persons of all ages, so much so that dancing could not commence. The Admiral therefore went gaily among the ladies on the quarter-deck saying: "Si tous les dames ancientes voulez aller sur le poop." Euphonism of the "ancientes" created a stir among the married ladies.

A few months after leaving the *Northumberland* Hewett died in Haslar Hospital, and Sir John Baird succeeded him. Jock Baird, as he was commonly called, was a well-known figure in the Navy of those days—a good sportsman about whose wild youth many tales were told. He was most popular. Sacheveral Darwin came as our Flag-Captain.

It seems almost incredible that in 1889 our Channel Squadron consisted only of the *Northumberland*, *Agincourt*, *Monarch*, and *Iron Duke* battleships and the *Curlew*, a torpedo-sloop. The Mediterranean Fleet was but little better. There is no doubt that had we gone to war with France in those days we might well have been swept off the face of the globe. Fortunately the Admiralty and the country had just woke up and had begun to appreciate our perilous position. The Naval Defence Act of 1887, for which Lord George Hamilton deserves great credit, saved the country.

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As can well be imagined, such out-of-date ships, slow in speed and with guns of inadequate range, had stunted the growth of battle tactics. Knowledge of the principles of naval strategy was confined to a very few of the leading thinkers of the Navy. I always look on the year 1889 as marking the lowest level of efficiency of material that the British Navy had known since the middle of the eighteenth century. The officers and men were just as zealous, their love of their profession was just as great as it ever had been, or is now, but they were imbued with ideas that had not altered with the times. Sail drill still occupied a paramount place in the scale by which efficiency was judged. Gun-range was too short to evoke any real interest in gunnery as an art. With slow ships and short range of fire, tactics had not advanced beyond ideas of a close-range *mêlée*. Fleet manœuvres, that is the practice of ships of a fleet in altering their formation, were exercised, but no one appreciated whether these gyrations would be of use in fighting or not.

The following examples will perhaps illustrate the general chaotic ideas of strategy and tactics then existing. In one of the annual manœuvres three little gunboats were in Holyhead Harbour when four large cruisers appeared off the port. The Senior Officer of the *Fly*, the *Bug*, and the *Beetle* immediately put to sea to fight the cruisers, with a result that his vessels were at once put out of action. The reason that he gave for this suicide and murder was : " You would not have a British man-of-war refuse to fight, would you ! "

The study of strategy in those days was not helped much by the annual manœuvres, which generally gave

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one side or the other a hopeless task to perform. Of course it is impossible to arrange any peace scheme in which one side has not an advantage over the other, but the general belief at sea was that the early manœuvres were framed to show how weak we were at sea and how urgently ships were required; and that the later ones were intended to prove to the British public how the increase in ships under the Naval Defence Act had made the country safe. Be this as it may, the first act in manœuvres in those days was for both sides to put to sea at full speed, whereas in actual war the first duty of battle fleets is to remain in harbour, and keep their fires low but ready for bringing forward.

About this time a mishap, from the Admiralty point of view, occurred in one of the annual manœuvres. The manœuvres in that particular year were intended to glorify the defence of the Channel; but hostile cruisers raided the northern towns of England, levying blackmail. This was quite useless as an operation in war, but absolutely upset what the Admiralty wished to prove. Of course everyone at sea revelled in their disappointment. Another mistake made by the Admiralty was in 1891, when they gave Sir Michael Culme-Seymour an impossible task, but at the same time forgot to put a southern limit to the manœuvre area. He took the Fleet down to the Canary Islands, coaled the ships at sea—which in itself was a most valuable lesson—and brought it back to the Channel after the date for the termination of the manœuvres had elapsed, so that it was too late for the opposing Fleet to gobble it up. Great was the Admiralty wrath —but the intention to glorify the defence of the

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Channel was so obvious that an Admiral was perfectly justified in avoiding the destruction of his Fleet even to the extent of steering them through a loophole in the rules.

A good example of absence of knowledge of fighting tactics was afforded when Admiral Baird asked each Captain in his Fleet by signal what formation he recommended for the Fleet in action. Each one gave a different answer. One excelled the others by suggesting " ships in quarterline disposed quarterly." This formation was about the worst that ships with short-range guns could assume for fighting. When asked his reason for this proposal, his reply was that " he thought it was about as good as any other." Really his answer summed up the general knowledge of the majority regarding the fighting tactics of that time.

It was in the *Northumberland* that I first made the acquaintance of the late Sir John Thursfield, who came to us for the annual manœuvres as special correspondent to *The Times*. The Navy had an instinctive horror of newspaper correspondents, but Thursfield soon disarmed all mistrust and earned the complete confidence of the authorities. He did more than any man alive, or dead, to make the Navy look on the Press as a friend and not as a prying busybody.

The *Northumberland* was not lighted internally with electric light. My predecessor had managed to obtain a set of secondary batteries under the plea of illuminating the semaphore at night, and the ship had a dynamo for working the searchlights. He had also begged, borrowed, or stolen enough wire to run temporary circuits in certain parts of the ship. It was my business to improve these by similar methods of acquisition.

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I was fortunate in getting a small dynamo, engine and boiler ostensibly for working a searchlight for temporary harbour defence from a boat at a distance from the ship. With this we charged the batteries when the fires in the main boilers were drawn. We therefore were fairly comfortable so far as light was concerned. However, when the Admiral was entertaining, much light was consumed; and his cabin took more current than the fuse blocks were legitimately warranted to stand. I dared not put in copper fuses on such temporary circuits—so occasionally a fuse block would heat and melt the fuse, and sarcasm would result. One night when some ladies were dining this happened. The fuses were replaced quickly, but I expected the usual sarcastic remarks next morning on the reliability of electricity. However, next day the Captain met me with the remark: "You did the finest thing last night you ever did. Miss So-and-so, the American girl, was telling about the tallest story we ever heard, and just at the end that ohm of yours got into your stuff and put the lights out, and she had to acknowledge that even the light could not stand her story."

Prince George of Wales joined the *Northumberland* at this time. Not only was he thoroughly efficient in all the duties of a Lieutenant, but he was a shining example to all of us in that ship, and probably to everyone in the Fleet, in the meticulous care he took as regards correspondence. Not only did he write home practically every day to his own immediate family circle, but no letter from a correspondent was left unanswered for more than twenty-four hours.

On one occasion off Yarmouth on the East Coast we gave an "at home" on board, and many from the

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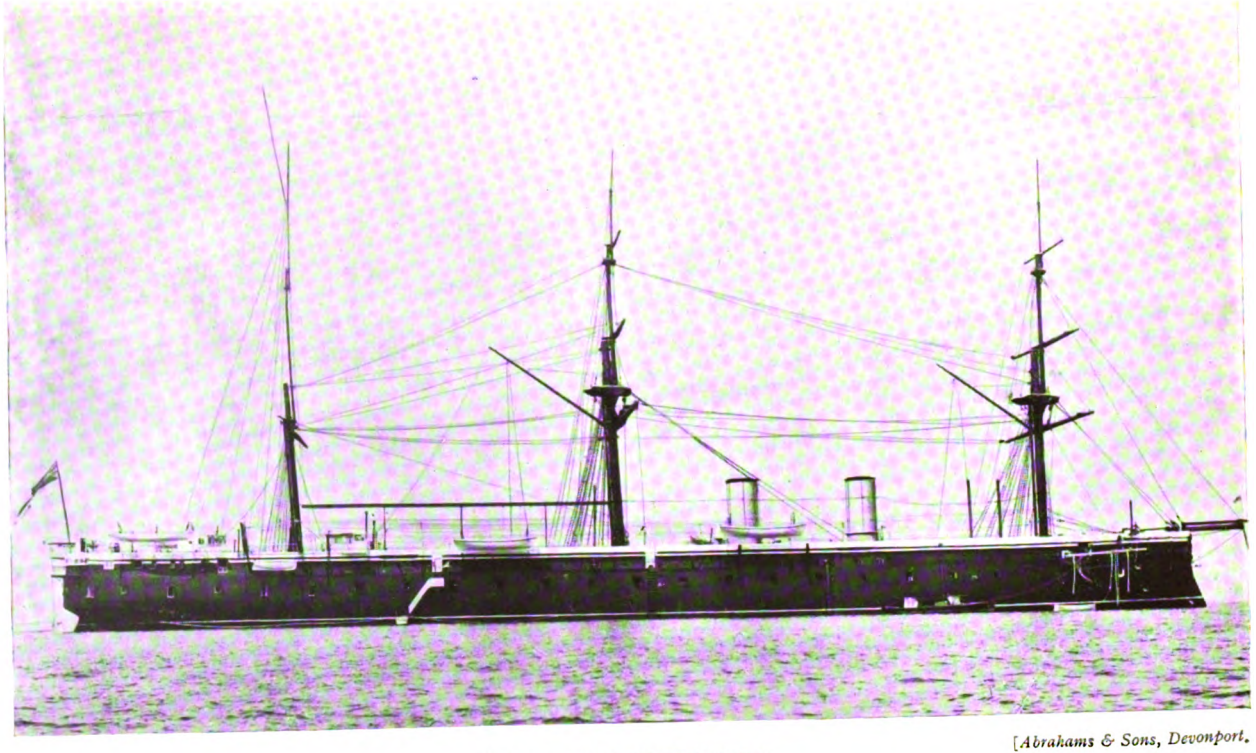

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H.M.S. "NORTHUMBERLAND."

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shore flocked to see the ship. Unfortunately the wind and sea got up and the ship began to roll, and before we could disembark our guests we had sea-sick ladies laid out in rows along the upper deck. Admiral Baird and his staff did their best, plying the invalids with champagne. At last we got all away except one lady who said she would sooner die than leave the ship; however, she was carried and carefully dropped into the boat. We narrowly escaped the fate of another ship that had to put to sea with a few dozen sea-sick guests of both sexes on board.

When the *Agincourt* paid off close to us alongside the dockyard we were much troubled with rats; all her store-rooms had been cleared, and therefore there was nothing left on board for her rats to eat, so they came over to us and swelled our numbers. We tried many ways of getting rid of them, but we never seemed able to reduce their number. When at last they began to wake me up by running over my bunk in the night I thought it was time to proceed to strong measures. I therefore got one of the electric quill tubes filled with black powder, which were used for firing the guns, slipped it into a piece of cheese, rested this on the top of a rod in my cabin which I could watch, had an electric battery and firing key close to my hand, and then laid down in my bunk to await results. After a little time an old rat came and sniffed the cheese, but was shy. At last, however, greed got the upper hand and he began to nibble the cheese. I then pressed the key, the tube exploded in the rat's face, and away he went crying like a baby. After this no more rats troubled my cabin.

In 1889 we cruised up the Baltic, calling at Copen-

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hagen, as their Majesties the King and Queen of Denmark were having a family reunion at Elsinore. The Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, gave a luncheon on board which all his relatives attended. It was an interesting gathering, as in addition to the Prince and Princess there were the King and Queen of Denmark, the Czar and Czarina, the Czaritza, the late Czar, Prince Edward and Prince George, now King George V, King George and the Queen of Greece, the Crown Prince and Princess of Denmark.

Looking back over the happenings of the last thirty years, I am forced to the conclusion that to be a King or Queen is to join the most dangerous calling in the world. I have had the honour of being presented to twenty-two Kings and Queens, and out of these, five have been murdered and four deposed; in other words, nearly 25 per cent. have died through violence, besides those forcibly deposed.

After leaving Copenhagen we went on to Kiel, where the German Emperor visited the ship. He also presided at a "bier-abend," given in our honour, and well do I remember sitting opposite an officer who drank twenty-two glasses of beer during the evening.

Years afterwards the German Emperor visited Malta and while there he visited the *Caesar* in Naval uniform and inspected the ship. The Captain of the ship, Pipon by name, was of two minds whether it was, or was not, correct etiquette to ask the Kaiser to have a glass of champagne. After all he might have given Royalties the credit for being human beings. When the inspection was over and while he was debating this point in his mind, the Kaiser turned to Pipon and said:

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" This is the *longest ship*[1] I have ever been in. You have never offered me a drink, so I will fine you for your omission: you must, on my birthday, ask all your brother Captains to dinner and drink my health." This was in due course done, and a telegram sent announcing that fact, to which a suitable reply was received.

[1] A " Long Ship " is a technical term for a dry ship in the Navy. That the Kaiser should have used so colloquial a Naval phrase shows what a good memory he must have had.

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CHAPTER XI

1890–1891

H.M.S. "CAMPERDOWN"

Sir Michael Culme-Seymour—A shooting incident—Secret signals—Near disaster—A lucky mistake—The loss of the *Utopia*—A tragic episode—The effect of tide on life-saving—In the hospital grounds at Gibraltar—Recovery of the bodies—Seville—A cock fight—Bull fighting—The defects of the Admiral class—A splendid rebuke—Defective gun circuits—Scarborough—A gale of wind—An accident—Entertaining the French—A novel dinner table—The *Howe*—Court martial—A queer reason for the loss of a ship—Appointed to the *Vernon*—Jumping a boom.

WE paid off the *Northumberland* in 1889 when she was relieved by the *Camperdown*. Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour relieved Sir John Baird, and Captain Francis Bridgeman Simpson came as Flag-Captain. There was considerable doubt as to which of the officers would turn over to the new flagship. No man could say more plainly in a few words what he wished to convey than the new Admiral, and accordingly he gave out that he intended to have a completely new complement of officers. He, however, came on board and interviewed some of us; when I appeared before him he told me I would have to stay because he could not get anyone else! Which was a thoroughly sound, but, to me, not a very satisfactory reason. I do not remember serving under any more efficient Admiral than Sir Michael, or any senior officer for whom I had a greater regard. He was excellent at handling the Fleet, full of energy, and feared no man, and was one of

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162] ADMIRAL SIR MICHAEL CULME-SEYMOUR.

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those men best described by the saying, "As straight as a die." He also had the courage of his convictions; hence he sometimes spoke his thoughts aloud, to the amusement of those near him. Moreover, his voice carried a long way. One day when covert shooting, he shot rather close to another gun posted out of sight; who, as the shot rattled among the saplings, raised the dickens of a hullabaloo, shouting out, "Look where you are shooting, sir," etc. etc. Sir Michael's distinctive voice was heard down the line saying, "What's the man making a fuss about? It's only bird shot!" Evidently, had it been a bullet or a 15-inch shell he might have received some sympathy.

One of the lessons learned from the manœuvres of 1887 was the difficulty of recognising friendly ships and boats from those of an enemy, especially at night. The danger of a mistake was very apparent, especially between ships and torpedo-boats. In day-time during a war a certain chance of accurate recognition existed, since the build of our boats differed from that of the torpedo craft possessed by any possible enemy; but, even so, a good deal could be done in the way of camouflage to make a sufficient resemblance between the boats of the two nations to render detection difficult, and at night-time all boats appeared alike. The need of a good night recognition signal was therefore greatly felt. I had an inspiration in this direction which I thought might be developed, so I made the acquaintance of Sir Norman Lockyer, who offered me the use of a laboratory at South Kensington. I obtained leave from the Admiralty and went for six weeks and worked under him, where I had a most

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interesting time and picked up a good deal of useful information. I worked on and off at the idea for many years, but never could get the range of my recognition light more than a mile and a half. During the war the late Sir William Crookes came to see me at Dover, having reinvented my light, but in a cruder form. He was much interested when he saw what I had arrived at twenty-four years before.

The Whitehead torpedo of those days was a great improvement on the original design, but at the best it was an erratic weapon. Even the latest pattern had but little metacentric height and consequently rolled during its progress through the water. When a torpedo rolls it usually deflects to the right or left and after so doing continues its run in a wrong direction. One of the ways in which it was proposed to use these weapons was to hang one over each side of one of the steamboats which were carried by the ships, and to send her away at night to attack an enemy's vessel anchored in a harbour. The torpedoes ran erratically even when fired from the ship, but their behaviour was much worse when used from the steamboat, and this unreliability was responsible for giving me the greatest fright of my life.

Gibraltar in those days had only the Admiralty mole as a protection in bad weather, the other breakwaters were not in existence, so the anchorage was more or less open to the sea. While the Fleet was at this place I was determined to try to get to the bottom of the bad running of the torpedoes, and on each fine day whenever it was possible exercised firing the torpedoes from the boats in the open water outside the harbour. A midshipman was attached to me to

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learn torpedo work, and as part of his instruction I delegated the duty of making the necessary adjustments to the torpedo before each run. One of these adjustments regulated the depth at which the torpedo was to run below the surface of the water. On one fateful occasion I told him to adjust the torpedo to run at six feet depth, and when all was ready we fired the torpedo in a direction well clear of the harbour. However, no sooner had the disgraceful thing taken the water than it deflected fifty degrees to the right and made a bee line for a yacht at anchor. This yacht was a medium-sized steam yacht, painted white, with awnings immaculately spread, bright work glistening, and aft could be seen the heads of the owner and his guests as they sat enjoying the peace of a warm spring morning in harbour without any suspicion of latent danger, or that an infernal torpedo was bent on doing its best to sink the yacht. Of course there was no gun-cotton charge in the head of the torpedo, but the machine weighed about a third of a ton, travelled at the rate of about thirty miles an hour, and had a vicious steel nose which could easily punch a good-sized hole in a yacht's plating. We were powerless to prevent the accident; all we could do was to wait and watch the bubbles left behind the torpedo, plainly showing that it was going at full speed straight for its victim. Momentarily I expected to see a panic on board the yacht, but marvellous to say, when the bubbles went right up to her side peace still reigned and nothing exciting happened. With thankfulness at heart I picked up the torpedo and found the midshipman had set it in error to run sixteen feet below the water instead of six feet and so it must have

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scraped just underneath her keel. But for this mistake the yacht would probably have sunk before she could have been docked, and incidentally I should have lost all chance of promotion in the Navy.

On St. Patrick's night, 1891, the ship was lying alongside the mole at Gibraltar; we were in good fettle, looking forward to a cheery evening and an impromptu concert, but just as we were sitting down to dinner a shore battery commenced firing minute guns. Evidently something serious had happened, and we soon learned that an Italian emigrant ship was sinking.

As a matter of fact an Italian emigrant ship, the *Utopia*, had rounded the mole without appreciating that the anchorage was largely filled with men-of-war. All too late she tried to steer between the *Anson*, one of our battleships, and the mole, but the tide swept her on to the *Anson's* ram, tore a hole in her side, through which the water rushed in such large quantities that in a few moments her stern sank on to the bottom.

It was a terror of a night, blowing a whole gale from the south-west and raining as it only can rain in southern waters. All boats were called away to go to the wreck, and, without waiting to change, off we most of us went, mess jackets, white shirts, pumps and all. The *Anson* had switched on her searchlights, and as we approached these glared through the haze of rain and showed us a large steamer with her stern already submerged but her bow still above water. Her fo'c'sle was crowded with human beings, some of whom were hanging over the bulwarks trying to get into boats which had already arrived from the ships nearest to the disaster. Pulling hard, we arrived within

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a couple of hundred yards of her when suddenly a bulkhead gave way, a rush of air blew up the gratings of the fo'c'sle hatches, and the bow with its struggling masses plunged below water. The waves, for there was quite a sea running, broke over the place where her stern lay submerged, then rushed forward through and past the many obstructions furnished by her upper works and dashed over the now submerged fo'c'sle, sweeping away any of the poor emigrants who remained above water.

The ship was now resting on the bottom with her masts and funnel towering above water and her boats' davits awash. The rigging had provided a place of refuge for many, but the iron davits, like huge horns, guarded its near approach, threatening to pierce and smash any boat that tried to lay close alongside to receive the survivors. One of our twelve-oared cutters with Lieutenant Sullivan, a gallant fellow, dashed up to the rigging, from which people literally fell into the boat in a swarm. Overloaded, and unable to use all her oars, the sea lifted and swept her clear across the deck, missing by luck the rigging on the other side, and in a sinking condition she drifted, rather than pulled, to the beach, which fortunately was close at hand.

Our main difficulty was to induce the emigrants to jump. To most of them this voyage was their first experience of the sea, it was therefore not remarkable that, after days of sea-sickness, they should have been dazed when, roused by the collision, they found themselves surrounded by seething water with the hull of their ship vanished from sight. The howling wind and cutting rain froze their fingers and numbed their senses, and it is little to be wondered at that they

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had not the energy to risk a jump into the boats, which at times were touching, and at others six feet away from the rigging, as they danced up and down and to and fro at the will of the sea. One man wound his wife's hair round his arm and jumped bringing her with him; but such cases were rare.

In the Captain's gig we did all we could in picking up survivors; but the crew was a scratch one, so when I returned to the *Camperdown* with those we had picked up I changed the crew and returned to the wreck. I got back just in time to witness a most dramatic ending to our endeavours. One man had climbed up on to a small platform joining the waste-steam pipe to the funnel, and stood there in comparative safety, but it was a question how long he could manage to hold on. The gale was blowing itself out and the sea was going down, which enabled Captain Bouverie Clark with his steamboat to tow a small boat up to windward, astern of the wreck and gradually to drop her over the stern of the ship along the upper deck up to where the man clung. It was a ticklish business, and the first attempt failed; at the second trial, however, the boat got successfully close to the funnel through the water breaking over the poop. Then as the second for action arrived nearly everyone watching shouted "Jump." The man—a plucky fellow—jumped and landed in the boat. But at the same instant a fateful wave caught the boat, spun it round completely as if it had been a mere cork, and twisted the tow rope with a turn round the main stay, so that the boat was moored at short scope to the stay in a considerable sea. Was there ever such a mischance? It was a thousand to one against such a thing hap-

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pening. Again fifty voices at least shouted "Cut"; it was the only chance.

Whether the man appreciated his condition or whether he had no knife I know not, but time was short, already the next big wave was curling over the stern; on it came and caught the boat, which, being no longer free to rise, could not breast its steep slope, Up reared the stern of the boat till it capsized, and the last, perhaps one of the pluckiest, of that fated band joined some of the four hundred victims that were to be mourned in distant Italian villages and country-sides.

The tides at Gibraltar are capricious; sometimes there are none, sometimes they run strongly towards varying points; it is impossible to forecast their strength or direction. We none of us appreciated at the time that the gale had caused a strong north-easterly stream to run past the end of the mole; this tide added to the tragedy of the episode. Had there been no tide, or had we only appreciated that there was a three-knot tide running from the wreck up to the neutral ground, the boats would have paddled and drifted with the stream of human beings which had been washed into the sea when the bows of the ship submerged, and without doubt we might have saved another hundred persons. But in the dark, and in the gale, it seemed as if the sea and wind were the forces that necessitated our putting forth all our strength in order to pull to windward; we never thought of, or accused the tide. Hence, in straining our muscles to reach the wreck we were in reality pulling right through and away from those we were endeavouring to save and who were drifting past us vainly hoping for our help.

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That night all those who had been saved were taken either on board the ships or else to the Naval Hospital ashore. We in the *Camperdown* accommodated many, among whom were three women who had gone off their heads and who shrieked for the greater part of the night; next morning all were sent to the hospital. It would tax the powers of the most realistic and sentimental writer to describe the scene that day in the hospital grounds. Imagine some three or four hundred persons who had gone through the throes of death the night before, who knew nothing of the fate of other members of their families, searching every ward and corner of the ground and scanning eagerly every face that passed. The sudden hope of a seemingly familiar figure, the crushing disappointment on nearer approach. Then the sudden shout of joy and relief when husband found wife, or a mother her child. The heights of joy jostled with the depths of anguish and despair; in fact, all emotions were mingled toying with and swaying that seething crowd. As the day waned the exuberance of joy relaxed, but the intensity of the despair grew deeper and deeper, finding vent in vain lamentations and tears.

The local authorities were much perturbed at the prospect of some four hundred bodies being washed ashore during the hot weather, they therefore asked the Admiral if he would allow the divers of the Fleet to recover as many as possible for decent burial. He agreed to the proposal, and I was given charge of the operations. I never undertook a more gruesome occupation. Suffice it to say that the one outstanding fact brought to light was that a child was never found unless close to a woman, and some mothers were found

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with their babies tied in shawls round their necks, so greatly did the instinct of motherhood survive even the terrors of threatened death.

It was during these operations that we found sad evidence that the tide had carried a living stream, struggling in the water, up towards the neutral ground and away from the boats; for the majority of the bodies were recovered from a broad lane leading in that direction. Let me urge anyone suddenly thrown into emergency life-saving in bulk at sea at night, to remember the tide and be prepared unhesitatingly to drift if necessary with it, although this may seemingly be away from the place of disaster. Keep where those in the water are at the moment, not at the place where they entered it.

Before the Fleet left we had accounted for all except twenty of the passengers and crew of the ill-fated ship.

Soon after this we left for Cadiz, and from there I went to Seville for a few days for change of scene after my morbid experiences. The weather was beyond reproach and set off to perfection the Moorish beauties of the Alcazar. I must confess to spending the most sporting Sunday of my life at this place, in that I witnessed a cock fight in the forenoon and a bull fight in the afternoon.

It was the only time that I ever witnessed cock fighting; the majority of the bouts did not impress me much, in fact there was nothing fascinating in the so-called sport. One bout, however, was quite exciting. The two cocks fought hard, and as one got gradually worsted the betting went more and more against the poor bird; at last he lay on the ground apparently

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lifeless, and the other strutted about the pit crowing lustily. The worsted warrior, however, was not dead, he was only knocked silly, and at the sound of the crowing he opened one eye and cocked his head up a little, then got upon his feet, went for his adversary, and in the end conquered and killed him.

A bull fight is a most fascinating sight. It is of course all wrong, brutal, senseless, everything you care to call it, but nevertheless there is a considerable fascination in the whole display. I went intending to see one bull killed, and I stopped till the end and witnessed the death of six. I should probably never go to another if I had the chance, but I am glad I saw this one. The actual killing of the bull is merely an incident, it is not that which attracts, in fact it would be distinctly more artistic if the bull could be merely stunned and his life spared. The misuse of the horses is repulsive to all except the lower portion of the audience. These are the items that detract from the performance.

If you are convinced that by going to a bull ring you are helping to perpetuate bull fighting, then stay away. If, however, you take a less egotistical view of life, namely, that your presence will not influence one iota the continuation of what is looked on by millions as a national sport, then I strongly advise you, men or ladies, to go to a bull ring when you have the opportunity and see the opening ceremony, leaving (especially the ladies) if you wish before the actual bull fighting commences. If you have an eye for colour you will be amply repaid. The theatre itself is of course in the open air, it has a shady side which contains the expensive seats and a sunny side where the poorer people

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sit; one is in brilliant sunlight and the other in deep shade, with a dividing line as sharp as if it had been ruled in ink. The coloured dresses of the peasants, the black of the ladies, the gay clothes of the fighting personnel all catch and please the eye.

The ceremony commences with a parade round the ring of all the personnel, in gorgeous attire, then the chief matador, advancing to a position opposite the President's box, makes a speech eulogising the bull, after which doors in the ring are opened and in he comes. Sometimes it is with a rush, at other times he is sulky. Then the baiting begins by the bandolieros and picadores goading him into a state of fury, so that in the end he will charge the matador blindly and furiously. A charging bull is much easier to kill than a sulky one, the reason being that the head of the animal must be lowered so as to expose a small area, just a small spot behind the neck, at which the point of the matador's sword is directed, and in addition the speed of the bull must be great enough to ensure sufficient pressure for the point of the sword to penetrate the spine. When this is the case the animal falls at once stone dead.

The first bull our matador had to tackle was sulky, and therefore correspondingly difficult to dispatch. The result displeased the mob, who "hissed" by rhythmically repeating beats of three claps with their hands. Naturally the matador became very angry, and when the next bull came in he took the part of the bandoliero, running straight at the charging bull and placing two short barb-pointed sticks with streamers attached one close to each ear. This was done extraordinarily gracefully. He then took a pole and jumped the bull lengthways while he charged, and finally dispatched

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him in approved style. The temper of the crowd changed gradually during this clever performance, and after the fatal stroke was delivered, hats, coats, coins, all were showered down into the ring by an excited and cheering mob.

The "Admiral" class of ships, of which the *Camperdown* was one, was a great improvement in some ways over the earlier types of battleships, but the vessels suffered from the defect of being far too low in the bows, with the result that in a seaway, when steaming head on to even a very moderate sea, we shipped a lot of water.

The barbettes had merely light canvas covers that were easily washed away, so there was little to prevent the water from finding its way in quantities down below. Off the coast of Scotland on one occasion we got into a gale of wind and had to steam against the sea to keep clear of the shore, with the result that after one or two hours we had taken in hundreds of tons of water. In the magazine passages I was literally above my knees in water paddling about, much exercised as to the effect such a volume of water might have on the bare electric light switches and fuses. When we had made a sufficient offing we had to turn the ship round while the small drain pipes gradually drained the water down to the main pipe leading to the pumps.

This gale showed that the whole of the "Admiral" class were really useless as seagoing fighting ships, so on returning to the dockyard the chief official came on board to inquire into the report made by the Admiral. Sir Michael Culme-Seymour considered the matter so important that he personally conducted the said great official to the fo'c'sle and explained to him

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H.M.S. "CAMPERDOWN." [*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

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what had happened during the gale. When he had ended the great man put on his gold pince-nez and said in a simpering way, "Come, come, Sir Michael, you sailors should not come back and tell us tales like that," on which the wrath of the Admiral rose and boiled over. "Damn the man!" he said, "he tells me I tell a lie; turn him out of the ship"; and storming, he drove the Great One along the quarter-deck to the gangway. He ended by saying: "I constantly hear from naval officers that they come home and report what has happened at sea and they are merely pooh-poohed and disbelieved. Turn him out of the ship." And so, the very incarnation of the Jackdaw of Rheims after the curse, with mien dejected and protesting, his pince-nez hanging, his frock-coat dragging limply from his shoulders, even his tall hat seeming to have lost its gloss, he departed to report as best he could to the Admiralty. It was one of the best merited and most effective rebukes I have ever heard delivered.

My chief trouble in the *Camperdown* was to get the guns to fire when we were at gun practice. Ingenuity had been let loose on the design of the electric circuits for firing them. Each theorist in turn seemed to have introduced an additional safety arrangement, so that in the end the combination was so safe that the guns usually refused to fire. I wrote and pointed this out. Naturally the gunnery and torpedo schools, who had invented the circuits, said it was all nonsense, but at last Sir Michael took the matter up and a committee was appointed to investigate. Of course I was well prepared and exhibited to them a chart showing how, during the previous three months, the electrical resistance of the currents had varied daily and at times

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hourly. To cap all, when we went to action stations the first thing that occurred was a miss-fire. The matter then was taken seriously in hand, and in the end the guns became reliable.

Much the same thing happened in the war. Theorists had been for some years muddling at the fuses for detonating our shell, with a result that the shell frequently detonated inside the gun, and those that dropped near the enemy were often blind. I saw several of our guns at the front in the early part of the war which had been burst by shells detonating prematurely with disastrous results to the gun crew.

But to return to our gun circuits. The electrical circuit that was used normally for firing the guns contained safety arrangements to prevent the gun being fired unless it was run right out into its firing position, unless the breech was properly closed, unless the lock was properly shut, unless No. 3 of the gun crew was in a safe position; and lastly, there was the firing key. But extraordinary to relate, in case this super-safe circuit was damaged another was provided which had none of these arrangements; so that normally, when men were not excited, extreme safety was assured, but the moment excitement occurred from the guns missing fire, all safety devices were abolished. The result of such lunacy had been foretold, and one day actually occurred. In the turret of a ship, for some inexplicable reason, someone had forgotten to screw round the breech block and so close the breech; the safety device did its duty and the gun missed fire. Thinking that the circuit was at fault, the officer at once used the other circuit in which there were no safety arrangements, with the result that the gun fired

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but the breech block blew out and killed practically all the turret's crew. It is by such cruel happenings that efficiency and safety are in the end obtained.

The Fleet went on what in the Navy was called an "Hurrah trip"—that is, a trip round the coast of England to popularise the Navy. While off Scarborough, the Mayor and Corporation gave a ball which of course the Admiral and Flag-Captain, among many other officers, had to attend. During the evening a gale sprang up and the sea rose so quickly that none of the officers could re-embark. More than one ship parted her cable and had to clear out, and we in the *Camperdown* had to lie with two anchors down and all our cable out. The Commander was in command and I was doing the duty of Navigating Officer as the Staff Commander was among those ashore.

While paying out additional cable to ease the strain on the chain it was necessary for men to work on the fo'c'sle, which in that class of ship was low and near the water. Watching from the bridge while this work was in progress, we saw an extra large sea coming; vainly we shouted to the men to hold on to anything they could, but it was blowing far too hard for our voices to carry, and we had to be impotent spectators of a coming catastrophe. No other emotion I have ever experienced comes up to those seconds which occur on occasions in life when you see disaster impending to others which you are powerless to avert or mitigate in the slightest degree. Well down went the ship's nose, over the bow came tons of water, engulfing the whole fo'c'sle so that not a soul could be seen. Slowly the water drained and gradually bodies appeared, mostly against the chains and obstruc-

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tions of the fo'c'sle, where they had been caught as if in the meshes of a net. One man was never seen again, one had a skull fractured and bones were broken, but on the whole we got off cheaply. In the end our cable parted and we had to put to sea, and there remained until the gale subsided. When at last we got back to the anchorage a fair sea was still running and the officers, Admiral and all, had to be hoisted in with a whip on the main derrick. This episode was an example of an occasion where loyalty to the Admiral demanded the flagship staying at anchor until obliged to put to sea, although it might have been wiser to have done so; since his position was far from enviable when left ashore with his Fleet at sea in a gale.

We were sent on one occasion to Spithead to welcome a French Squadron. The Admiralty were anxious for us to entertain them well, and among other festivities we gave a dinner at the Naval College. As an extra compliment to the French officers I designed dinner tables with glass centres and used the thinnest linen procurable for tablecloths. Between the tablecloth and the glass, red, white, and blue coloured papers were introduced and the whole lighted below with electric lights. These lights were kept out until the toast of the French Republic was proposed; the ordinary lights of the room were then lowered and the lights under the table switched on, and the "tricolour" appeared as if by magic. Afterwards, on board the *Vernon* we followed the same idea for the supper tables for our dances, but each table had its own distinctive colour graduated in shade from the ends to the centre; the whole lighting of the room came from under the tables. As the table decorations were lighted

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entirely from underneath they appeared to be floating and not resting on the table.

Gradually all the older ships of the Channel Squadron were replaced by those of the "Admiral" class similar to the *Camperdown*. One, the *Howe*, had an unfortunate career. She had been rather hurriedly completed and leaked badly between her armour and the shelf on which it rested, also the joints of her steam pipes were leaky, consequently she used more coal and water per diem than the other ships. This in those days was accounted a grievous sin; moreover she did not excel at drill. Her name was suggestive and gave rise to her being called the "Anyhow" and the "Nohow." Later on she improved so vastly that these had to be changed to the "How d'you do it?" After Sir Michael had left the squadron she ran ashore going into Ferrol and ended her useful Service career.

The Captain of the ship was court martialled and was acquitted. Then the Admiral was tried and also acquitted, at which double event the Admiralty were extremely annoyed. Acquittals, however, are not of much value when the Admiralty are invested with the power of employing or leaving unemployed the officers of the Navy.

Courts martial as a rule are reliable on their adjudication of blame—but should any person tried receive too great a "benefit of the doubt," the Admiralty are able, by the exercise of their unfettered judgment, to keep unemployed anyone who they may consider had been too easily acquitted. It is well for officers to remember that the Navy is extremely jealous of the single-mindedness of the findings of court martials and condemns lenient acquittals as militating against

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the impartiality with which justice should be administered. I remember one case where the finding of a court was received with universal condemnation and every officer who sat on it lost prestige. It was a case of the stranding of a man-of-war; so clear was the case that the Captain who was being tried had packed up all his belongings ready to go home, yet he was acquitted. On this occasion the Admiralty threatened to use the powers they possess of holding an inquiry to ascertain how each member of the court had voted. A very wholesome threat, but one which, I believe, has never been carried into execution.

In one peculiar court martial I knew of a friend of mine and his Captain were both tried together by the same court for the stranding of a gunboat. Their defence was unimpeachable. The courses steered were correct, every allowance for tide perfect, no precaution had been omitted, and yet the ship ran on to a shoal many miles out of her proper course. As both officers were being tried at the same time, neither could be called on to give evidence against the other. The court in the end was bound to acquit the officers and to assign the stranding to some unknown cause. After the court had been dissolved the President asked the Captain what was the real reason of the stranding, and was told that the ship had been carrying stores up to the Fleet, the Dockyard had put on board a lot of old canvas which was stowed round the base of the binnacle of the compass, and unbeknown to the ship's officers there was a considerable quantity of steel rope stowed inside the canvas. This deflected the compass, with the result that a false course was steered which put the ship ashore. The Admiralty thus learned a

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lesson that it was wise always to try officers separately, since each could then be called on to give evidence against the other.

In 1891 I was appointed away from the *Camperdown* to join the Staff of the *Vernon*, where I took charge of the electric light instruction. After one year of this work I was appointed to command the *Vesuvius*, a tender to the *Vernon*, which appointment carried with it all trials, experiments, and instruction in the use of the Whitehead torpedoes. The only small excitement that came my way during this time was charging a boom of Admiralty design in a torpedo-boat. Booms were then in considerable requisition for closing the entrance holes left in the breakwaters which were being constructed to protect the harbours at Gibraltar, Portland, Malta, and Dover. They were essentially floating obstructions, composed of wooden baulks secured together by hawsers. The baulks in some cases had venomous iron spikes projecting from them to pierce and rip the plating of any torpedo-boat that might try to jump over them. My predecessor, Doveton Sturdee, had charged the Mediterranean design of boom, which boom had proved invincible, as it ripped holes in the bottom of his boat and caused her to sink.

The Admiralty invention was a boom elastically moored with six-inch wire hawsers to catch and stop the boat. I had wood strong-backs fitted the whole length of the boat, rising to the height of the funnel, in order to guide the hawsers up into the air and over the boat, ourselves, and its funnel, and these I shod with a T-iron with its edge sharpened. We charged the boom at full speed, the T-irons cut through the hawsers and we passed safely over the wood baulks.

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The Admiralty were rather annoyed at the cavalier way we had treated their design and ordered the removal of the T-irons. When next we tried of course we were stopped and the boom was considered to have succeeded. It was probably good enough for the purpose for which it was intended.

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CHAPTER XII

1896–1897

H.M.S. "THESEUS" AND THE BENIN EXPEDITION

A journalistic venture—Difficulty of getting employment—The special service squadron—Wrong nominal lists—Commissioning the *Theseus*—Loss of the *Victoria*—Sir George Tryon—A concensus of errors—Lesson to be learned—Beyrout—A cunning Turkish officer—Beyrout races—A plucky pony—Jerusalem—A bad accident—Benin expedition—Massacre of Phillips Mission—Orders to leave—Ralph Moor—Life on the West Coast—Fever—Captain Gallway—Appointed Intelligence Officer—Juju—Making a father—Interrogating natives—Making a plan of Benin City—Transport in the bush—Description of the bush—Native method of fighting—Pitfalls.

AFTER my promotion to Commander in 1895 I was six months on half-pay—the only period of unemployment I enjoyed in my thirty-five years' service in the Navy.

Naval officers are not permitted to write to the newspapers unless retired or on half-pay. It was during this period that I had my first journalistic adventure. A man much in the public eye wrote to one of the leading newspapers, why I know not, nor did I ever hear who had irritated him, but at all events his theme was that Gunnery and Torpedo Lieutenants were no seamen. I ventured to write and protest, giving my reasons for differing from his. His answer contained an old-time expression, "Everyone to his own job and the cook to the foresheet," which means that everyone should mind his own business. As he was a civilian and not an expert in Naval matters, I replied and suggested that he should apply his quota-

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tion *re* the cook to himself. The result was a furious reply saying he refused to carry on a correspondence if the editor allowed him to be publicly insulted. It was not till ten years afterwards that I learned that his proximate ancestry included a lady of culinary ability, and therefore, how outrageously but unintentionally I had wounded his feelings.

In those days it was difficult for a Commander to get an appointment as second-in-command of a cruiser or battleship unless he had served at sea as the First Lieutenant of a ship—the idea being that the latter occupation was an education for the former. This was true, but there was no reason why a Commander who had served as an ordinary, though not a First Lieutenant, should not be a thoroughly efficient second-in-command. As I had served the last part of my Lieutenant's time in the *Vernon*, I foresaw difficulty in getting to sea. Luck, however, came to my aid. The Kruger telegram, and attempts at tail twisting on the part of the United States, led to the commissioning of the Special Service Squadron under Admiral Dale. Two battleships, the *Renown* and *Royal Oak*, two first-class cruisers, the *Gibraltar* and *Theseus*, and two second-class cruisers were commissioned. I was appointed to the *Theseus* with Captain Charles Campbell in command. Foreign politics at the time were so muddled that we had no clear idea whether we were intended as a threat to Germany, France, or the United States. At all events the desired effect was produced, and our aggressors, whoever they were, "piped down."

The commissioning of the squadron was an experiment in mobilisation. It was the first time that a

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sudden *partial* mobilisation had taken place. Mobilisation for the annual manœuvres, when the schools were broken up and their men distributed as required, was a commonplace. But to commission six ships without disturbing the gunnery and torpedo schools upset every preparation, and an entirely new drafting scheme had to be made out in a hurry.

The lists of the men's names and ratings were sent on in advance of the men, and from them I proceeded with the stationing and berthing of the ship's company, so as to have everything ready for them on their arrival. But the fates decreed that some of the nominal lists that were sent were not intended for the *Theseus* at all, and so after commissioning we found out that the ship was manned by men whose names no one knew. To add to our troubles the men's certificates had miscarried, so that the only way of ascertaining the names of the crew was to ask each one personally what his name was and where he had come from. This was a difficult task, since the work of commissioning had to go on. It was a week before I was quite certain that all the men on board had been accounted for. Such mistakes cannot occur now.

We were inspected three days after commissioning and hurried off to join the Admiral at Spithead. From there we went to Bantry Bay; and afterwards, when the political fever subsided, we were absorbed into the Mediterranean Fleet, then commanded by Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, who had been given the command after the death of Sir George Tryon at the time of the loss of the *Victoria*.

I remember a peculiar coincidence in connection with the loss of that ship. On the day that she was

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rammed and sunk by the *Camperdown* a number of torpedo officers, myself included, were lunching at the works of Messrs. Whitehead, at Weymouth, where we had gone to witness some important torpedo trials. After lunch we were discussing the morning's work, when a wine glass that was standing on the table broke through the stem without warning or anyone touching it. Someone, I forget now who, remarked: "That should mean a big naval disaster."

Allowing for the difference in time owing to longitude, the glass broke just about the time that the *Victoria* was rammed.

An extraordinary sequence of mental aberration in several individuals was responsible for the disaster. In the first place, Sir George Tryon, who was acknowledged generally to be *facile princeps* among our Admirals—in fact, one of the three great Admirals that our Navy saw between 1875 and 1900—undoubtedly had what we sailors call "a kink in the brain," that is a deleterious and persistent idea that warped his reason. We all at times suffer to a small extent from these lapses when we mix up thoughts and muddle our deductions. In this case, without doubt, Sir George mixed up the *radius* of the circle his ship took while turning with its *diameter*. Of course in ordinary moments he would perfectly well have appreciated the difference between the two; but at that particular time in his mind he saw quite clearly that the *Victoria* and *Camperdown* had room to turn towards each other without actual contact, when in reality it was absolutely impossible for them to do so. Such a lapse was extraordinary enough, but what was still more extraordinary was that when the fact that the ships could

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not turn without a collision was pointed out to him by his Flag-Captain, his brain still refused to correct its error.

In a crescendo scale even still more extraordinary was the fact that although both the Captain of the *Victoria* and the Admiral second-in-command who flew his flag in the *Camperdown*, and the Captain of the *Camperdown*, that is, three separate officers of rank and experience; although all these knew that if the signal was obeyed there was bound to be a collision, yet they allowed the helms of their ships to be put over and the collision to occur. Vaguely we may imagine dim reasons that may have obsessed them, such as a thorough belief that the Commander-in-Chief would do something at the last moment; accustomedness to implicit obedience; belief that the other ship would correct the mistake, and so on. But no rational explanation can completely account for the universal dementia that paralysed the minds of the principal actors in that tragedy. The one lesson to be learned is the necessity for every officer to cultivate belief in his own judgment, so as not to be afraid of acting correctly and without fear of anyone when the day of trial comes. This incident has provided the Navy with a lesson of the duty owed by juniors towards senior officers that it is well for officers to ponder over and digest.

A newly commissioned ship (and the word "ship" must be taken as a generic term to include officers and men) has a difficult time when she suddenly finds herself in a fleet of ships all of which have been many months in commission. She has to compete in all drills, and has in fact to run before she has really had

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time to learn to walk. We were therefore glad when the Admiral sent us to the coast of Syria by ourselves.

We spent a pleasant time at Beyrout, visiting Damascus, where I got a day's cock shooting with our Consul. We berthed in the inner harbour, where there was just room for us to lie, but we had to lay out the sheet anchor on our quarter in the shallow water to keep the ship from bumping the mole when she rolled in bad weather.

A Turkish gunboat lay not far off us whose Captain was an enterprising person. Of course he never went to sea unless he was obliged, but he was nevertheless held in high esteem by the natives ashore, who looked on him as wielding a vast power. The secret of his fame was a simple one. He always made a point of finding out the date and time of sailing of any foreign man-of-war that was anchored off the port; and then, as that time approached, he gave out ashore that he had ordered her to leave at a certain time on a given day. When she left he would merely remark: "She had to obey my orders."

When we left Beyrout we had to weigh the sheet anchor by means of the sailing launch—an amusement I recommend to all Commanders who desire to exercise their ingenuity.

One afternoon while at Beyrout a British military officer appeared on board to call; from him we learned that he was one of a party of three who had brought a pony up the coast to run in the Beyrout races. These races were the chief event in that part of the world. The Levantine population took a considerable

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[*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

H.M.S. "THESEUS."

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interest in them and some of the richer magnates kept small racing stables. It appeared that the animal they had brought was a pure-bred Arab pony which the syndicate had bought out of a vehicle in the streets of Cairo, then trained, and had reaped thereby considerable success in racing him in Egypt. The syndicate was well organised; one of the three looked after the pony more or less day and night, another ran the business part of the trip, while the third was the society representative who paid the necessary calls and made himself generally agreeable. It is always most gratifying to see such enterprise on the part of fellow-countrymen in out-of-the-way parts of the world, so the party were cordially welcomed. The races came on in due course and the pony won all the events for which it was entered except the Grand Prix, in which race he was second. However, an objection was lodged against the winner for not being a pure Arab. This was upheld by the Stewards, so in the end the plucky little pony swept the board.

We visited Jaffa, and most of the officers went to Jerusalem. I never was more disappointed in any country or place than with the Holy Land and Jerusalem. Truly the Israelites must have been quite forty years wandering in the desert before they could have described so arid and parched a land as Palestine as a land "flowing with milk and honey."

The Garden of Gethsemane was a tawdry enclosure, and at the Holy Places in Jerusalem the infidel Turk kept Moslem troops to prevent the Christians quarrelling and fighting. Moreover, women were hired to wail outside the walls of the city to keep up the old tradition for the benefit of the tourists.

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This cruise by ourselves was absolutely invaluable, as it enabled us to pull the ship's company together, get the ship really clean, start boat racing, and generally increase the *esprit de corps* of the ship's company. We left the Fleet a ship and returned to it a man-of-war.

In the *Theseus* I narrowly escaped death in a peculiar accident. We had been exercising running our Whitehead torpedoes, and having completed the practise were hoisting the last one on board, when the rope of the hoisting tackle broke; the torpedo fell, and its air chamber, which was charged to about 800 lb. pressure of air to the square inch, hit the edge of the brass gangway plate, and exploded and sent fragments flying in all directions. I was standing about three feet from the centre of the air chamber, but, fortunately for me, was in the embrasure between the gangway and the foremost 6-inch gun, and therefore was protected as high as my breast by a steel plate being between me and the torpedo, which plate was nearly cut through by the steel splinters. I had my cap blown off and head jerked back—for a moment I thought it was off—but was not otherwise damaged. Sad to say that others did not get off so lightly. Two of our splendid seamen had each a leg cut off. One I am glad to say recovered, but the other died the same night, much regretted by us all. The torpedo was of Austrian make of an early date before steel manufacture had become an art, and the steel of which the air chamber was made was too brittle to withstand a heavy local blow. One of the same pattern of torpedo had exploded on a previous occasion by striking a rock.

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In January 1897 the *Theseus* was lying in Malta Harbour almost completely devoid of coal, ammunition, and stores, as the lower parts of the ship had been emptied in order to carry out the usual triennial survey of the coal bunkers and small compartments. The ship's company were going through the annual musketry course, so that half of the seamen, marines, and stokers were four miles away at the rifle range. Life was seemingly easy, and the prospect of another fortnight's relaxation from full routine was not unpleasing. On the 15th of January at 9 o'clock we received a signal ordering the Captain to report at the Commander-in-Chief's office at once. Evidently something was in the wind. At 9.30 he returned and told me that we had to sail as soon as possible for the West Coast of Africa. A massacre of Europeans had taken place near Benin City. He asked when we could be ready for sea, and after half a minute's deliberation, I said at midnight. Then things began fairly to hum. The men had to be called back from the rifle range, stores, provisions, and ammunition drawn and got on board, and coal taken in—all at the same time, as well as the ship being made in other respects ready for sea.

The *Forte*, a second-class cruiser, received the same orders at the same time. At midnight we could have sailed, but she had certain parts of her engines under repair in the dockyard, so we had to wait for her, and therefore did not sail till 4 p.m. the next day. This delay was not unwelcome, since it gave us time to think of special stores likely to be required for an African expedition.

At Gibraltar we picked up Mr. Ralph Moor, Consul-

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General for the Niger Coast Protectorate, who had been on leave in England, during which time he had been temporarily relieved by Mr. Phillips. We then heard that this officer, new to the Benin Protectorate, had conceived the idea of visiting Benin City, and his party while on their way had been ambushed and massacred.

Ralph Moor was a born leader of men. I never met anyone who possessed this quality to the same extent. He would without doubt have risen to the highest posts in the Empire if it had not been for one flaw in his character. With men he was steel, with women he was wax. Hence a life in a distant colony, and a death deplored by all who knew him.

In his capacity as Consul-General Ralph Moor had command of the Protectorate forces, as well as the administration of the colony. The Niger Coast Protectorate was at that time policed by native troops commanded almost entirely by English officers; these had civil as well as military duties to perform in the various districts. The causes which led British officers to serve in so distant and unhealthy a region were many and varied. Love of adventure, desire to obtain experience of bush warfare and native life, and boredom of England, figured in company with bygone financial and social troubles. Whatever the reasons may have been for their being there, they were all keen and well suited to the life, and braved the inevitable attacks of malaria with uncomplaining stoicism.

What an extraordinary place the Benin area was! and I suppose is still! Early morning on the Benin

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River was a dream of beauty and enchantment. Midday brought a sweltering heat with air at saturation point, so that the lightest dress and a towel over the shoulders was the most comfortable attire, while the evening brought sandflies and mosquitoes. All the Europeans suffered from intermittent attacks of malaria. Quinine and perspiration were the two alleviants. The old hands who knew the Coast well took heavy doses of quinine when attacked, and piled on bedclothes until the perspiration dripped through their mattresses. In the end malaria usually conquered, but before this happened many attacks had been endured and weathered.

On arrival off Forcados we joined the *St. George*, Admiral Rawson's flagship. I was appointed Intelligence Officer, which I must confess was rather a surprise. However, I fortunately had at first as an assistant Captain Gallway of the Niger Coast Protectorate Force, who was Vice-Consul of the district and who had a good knowledge of the natives and their habits; this assistance was invaluable. Naturally the first duty of an Intelligence Officer was to find out the exact position of Benin City, for no one knew accurately where the town was. Its approximate position could be guessed at from the fact that two bush paths led to it, one from Gwato and one from Ceri, two places about twenty-three miles apart. The general direction of these paths could be ascertained, and of course the intersection of these two directions on a map gave the approximate position of Benin City. Our chief difficulty in obtaining any information regarding the town lay in the fact that Benin City was largely cut off from the surrounding districts by the Juju placed

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on trade, and a further Juju which did not allow the Beni to cross water. The country in fact was ruled by Juju.

Juju is one of those words that embrace ideas rather than concrete facts, and therefore it defies accurate definition. It is best summed up as "superstition." A gin bottle hung on to a branch is a Juju, or offering to some spirit. In a similar way the natives passing a fallen tree will pick a leaf and place it on the trunk; this is Juju. Or again, customs, such as not to cross water or any of the dicta of the Juju-men, again are Jujus. The King, for instance, had two Jujus—one not to enter the town before he was made king, the other not to leave it afterwards. The Juju which chiefly accounted for the isolation of Benin was one that did not allow the natives to cross water, hence they never visited the white men's settlements.

Benin City had a bad name, and few traders cared to venture into its precincts, although those who did go appear to have been well treated. In 1894 Captain Gallway had been on a mission to the city and had been well received, but here intercourse had ended. Rumours of human sacrifices and such devilries filtered through to the white settlement, but up to the time of the 1897 massacre the country had not been directly under our supervision, so there was no real warrant for our interfering with the internal arrangement of a State which neither molested us nor those who relied on our protection.

The visit of Mr. Phillips to Benin was most ill-advised. The King had been informed of the proposal, and had at once asked that the date should be post-

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VIEW OF WARRIGI.

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poned as he was "making his father," which is the native way of saying "feasting in memory of his father"—a feast which was really an orgy and debauch such as the uncivilised love. To make the visit after having received this intimation was bound to cause trouble. It would have been far wiser to have postponed the visit and awaited a more propitious time; but, if it was undertaken, a sufficient force should have been present to ensure the safety of the mission.

The only people who could supply correct information as to the route and the city itself were native carriers who, in the days when Nana traded in the rivers, had carried goods to Benin. Several of these carriers were collected and questioned. Anyone who tries to gather information from tropical natives must have a fund of patience, for the heathen brain works very slowly. Even civilised and educated persons find it difficult immediately to answer a question suddenly put to them, a short time being required to "collect their thoughts." With an uneducated savage this is intensified, and the time required is very much longer; his brain has to work round slowly until it gets on to the subject, and then further time is required to appreciate the question, and still more to think over and frame the reply. Moreover, the native is entirely indifferent as to whether he speaks the truth or lies, and also is by nature cunning. If asked, for instance, what the distance to a place is he first of all thinks, "Why does the white man want to know? probably he wants to send me," and promptly in his answer doubles the true distance. Before asking a native a distance it is necessary to convince him thoroughly

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that he is not wanted to make the journey. There is yet another difficulty: the native knows no unit of distance, so that distances have to be measured by the time it would take to make the journey. But the only times known are sunrise, sunset, and noon, and these in turn are far enough apart to give plenty of latitude for error. In the end, however, we got a good deal of information, and, by means of corks, paper, and string, on the floor of the Vice-Consulate, we even got three of them to make a rough plan of the principal compounds in Benin City.

The outstanding feature of the expedition was the excellent way in which it was organised. The flagship on the Cape Station had had one or two scraps with the natives, and the Chief of the Staff, Captain Egerton, had thoroughly profited by the experience gained. The essential feature of bush warfare is that no wheeled vehicle or even four-footed animal can be used for transport. The bush paths are generally too narrow to accommodate more than one person, and often the path itself is so worn by the bare feet of the natives that the sole of a boot catches in the earth at the sides; all loads must therefore be carried on the heads of the natives. A native can carry only fifty-five pounds, so a considerable number of natives are required to carry ammunition, food, and water for a fighting column. Take for instance the case of water. The very least amount of water each carrier can exist on is a quart per diem; each white man and fighting native requires two quarts. Now a gallon of water weighs about ten pounds, so each carrier can only carry five gallons or twenty quarts, or only four days' supply of water for himself and two fighting men. In an expedition esti-

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mated to last for four days in the bush, and to require a thousand fighting men, five hundred carriers would be required for the water alone. In addition food has to be carried for the carriers and troops, as well as ammunition and a necessary change of clothing, so that even for a four days' march in the bush, carriers about equal in numbers to the fighting men have to be provided.

All the loads had to be limited to fifty-five pounds' weight. The ration boxes were packed with provisions for twenty-four men for one day; so that each day every company of twenty-four men opened and lived on one box, after which the remnants were thrown away. No weighing out of food on the march was necessary, and the carriers who had carried the ration loads that had been eaten could be sent back at once, and be fed and watered at the base instead of on the march. Certain stores such as rum and limejuice were carried separately, and ammunition was carried in the usual cases.

Our column on the march through the bush was about two miles in length, and correspondingly vulnerable, since carriers were totally undisciplined and were liable to take alarm and stampede at the slightest excuse. The fighting men had therefore to be distributed throughout the whole length of the column to keep the carriers steady.

The bush country round Benin is in reality a forest of some 2,500 square miles in area without any break except a small clearing here and there for a village and its compound. Imagine this forest stocked with trees of great height, with a dense foliage overhead, with smaller trees interspersed between these monster pro-

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ducts of vegetable growth to fill up the gaps. Imagine between all these trees an undergrowth of rubber trees, shrubs, palms, and creepers, so thick that the eye could never penetrate more than ten yards, and often not even five. Imagine the fact that you might easily walk for an hour without seeing the sun overhead, and only at times get a glimmer of a sunbeam across the path, and you have an elementary conception of the bush country of Benin.

Through this dense mass of tangled undergrowth run paths leading from village to village, trodden only by barefooted natives in single line, so that the worn path is as a rule just broad enough for one man to walk in comfort, and the bush is so close that he could touch it each side with outstretched arms. Where the soil is soft, feet treading for centuries have worn the path to a lower level, and here banks strewn with dead leaves and debris rise each side almost to the level of a man's head. Where a tree has fallen across the path there it lies, and a new path is trodden to make a detour round the obstruction. There are no Rural Councils in Beniland; but as ages go by the tree decays and the old road may be resumed; or perhaps some philanthropic person may set light to the old dried wood and then the monster obstruction will gradually smoulder away like a huge piece of slow-match. It is impossible adequately to describe the grandeur of the magnificent cotton trees, with their splay roots extending like solid brackets for ten or twelve feet from the bottom of the main trunk; monuments of age and strength. Here and there great monkey ropes, decorated at intervals with orchids, festoon down, seriously impeding the carriers and their

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loads. Then, again, fine suckers, no thicker than a piece of string, hang down from some branch a hundred feet overhead, as if intended to supply moisture to that particular branch by a short cut. All is very lovely, very silent, very weird, and apparently a vast waste of vegetable production.

The method of fighting adopted by the natives is to lie in wait and attack the head of a column advancing along the bush path. They are of course quite invisible in the dense undergrowth. The best way of dealing with such an attempt is for the leading files of the column to fire volleys every few minutes low down into the bush on each side and ahead of the column. If there are any natives lying low they are either hit or get frightened; with the result that they generally fire their guns quickly and retire. If, however, they return the fire, it is well to get a Maxim into action and search the bush thoroughly, as an ambush in force may have been arranged. If the natives have sufficient notice of an advance they often cut an ambush path parallel to the usual path and use this to fight from and also as a line of retreat. These paths can generally be found, and an advance made along them as well as along the main track; walking, however, along a newly cut bush path is anything but pleasant.

Bush fighting is a weird business. From the time we entered the bush until the time we came out into the open near Benin, that is for four days, although we were engaged with the Beni for a certain amount of time each day, I do not think a single one of us saw a live native. Yells were heard, volleys were fired, men were wounded and some were killed, but never a sight

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of a native that could be sworn to. Fortunately we met with no pitfalls. These are dug in the ground and lightly covered with branches, earth, and leaves; at the bottom are pointed stakes, which inflict grievous wounds on anyone who has the bad fortune to fall on to them.

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CHAPTER XIII

1897

BENIN EXPEDITION (*continued*)

Problems of Intelligence Officer—Guides—Plan of operation—Attack on Sapobar and Gwato—Landing at Ologbo—Our first fight—Advance on Benin—Death of Ansell—Doubt as to route—Human sacrifices—Blowing down a stockade—A lucky rocket—How it arrived in Benin city—Advance on the town—Description of the city—Juju compounds—Altars—Pits—Carved tusks—Smell of blood—Effect of smells—Human sacrifices—Palaver house—Treasure house—Bronze plaques—Crucifixion trees—Burial ground—Water path—Water—Destruction of the general's compound—A Beni gentleman—Chopping Juju—The fire—Our losses—The march back—Fever breaks out—Taormina—A bad night—*Theseus* pays off.

THE problem which confronted me as Intelligence Officer, namely, that of leading the troops to Benin, was a difficult one. I had brought with me from the *Theseus* a deck watch, sextant, and artificial horizon to check our position by observation of the sun or stars, but the forest was far too thick to afford any chance of obtaining observations. In default I tried keeping a rough log by counting the paces taken and observing the direction by compass, but this I found impossible as the path twisted so frequently and at such considerable angles that any such record was bound to be quite unreliable. It was only possible each day to obtain a rough idea of our general direction and of the approximate distance we had marched. This was sufficient to show whether our general advance had been in the direction of Benin, or if our guides had played us false. At first we had some doubts as

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to their reliability; since their fear of the Beni and of visiting Benin might cause them to mislead us. There were three guides at my disposal. I kept one with me near the head of the column, one in the centre, and one in the rear, and never allowed them to meet or converse when we halted for the night; hence I was certain that there was no collusion between them. Only once was my chief guide, Owaghi, at fault, and that was when, near Benin, the natives had hidden the proper path at a bend, which is a thing they are extraordinarily clever at doing. I had then to call up the other two guides and go by the verdict of the majority.

The general plan of the operations was a simple one. Three days before the main column was landed at Ologbo to march by the shortest road to Benin, two smaller columns were to be landed to take and hold Sapobar and Gwato, the places where the eastern and western bush paths from Benin met the Benin river.

It was hoped by this means to divert attention from the main line of advance, and draw the Beni away from that route and the city itself. The scheme was successful, as our men at both the places were subjected to strong attacks, and kept a considerable number of the Beni daily employed.

These subsidiary attacks were made and the places taken on the 9th of February. On the 12th the main column landed at Ologbo, and after an hour's scrap with the natives we advanced to the village of that name about a mile away and held it until the whole of the disembarkation was completed. After this we had three days in the forest fighting and marching; each

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DRAWING A PLAN OF BENIN CITY.

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successive day being much like the one before. Every morning soon after starting our volleys would detect Beni in the bush, then came a running fight up to our halting-place for the night.

On the fourth day we reached Benin, and that day was fairly full of incident. At 4.30 a.m. we issued cocoa to all hands, each man as usual took an allowance of biscuit in his haversack. When we started at 6 a.m. the advance-guard was fired on at once. At the same time as the rear-guard was leaving the camp, one of the enemy incautiously showed himself, and was immediately killed by the rear-guard. The attack on the advance-guard continued on and off till 10.30, when a determined stand was made by the enemy, and Ansell, chief torpedo instructor, was shot. He was walking immediately behind me, being in charge of the demolition party which had been attached to me. Being a tall man of fine physique, with a beard, the Beni, who were only about fifteen yards inside the bush, probably picked him out on account of his fine appearance. He was a great loss to me.

Shortly after 11 o'clock we came to a branch in the road, and as there was at first a difference of opinion between the two leading guides as to the route, I called up the third, a deaf and dumb man; eventually all three agreed on the right-hand road. Following this road for about 200 yards, we came upon the first evidence that we were approaching Benin in the shape of a human sacrifice. Laid on the grass where two paths met was a young woman, horribly mutilated; a rough wooden gag tied on her mouth was clenched tightly by her teeth. The expression of her face told

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of the agony of her murder. At her feet lay a goat with its knees broken. I asked the guide what it meant, and he said it was to prevent the white man coming farther. A queer idea! A few yards farther brought us to another sacrifice; this time a man with his arms tied behind him lying on his face in the path, but for some reason he had not been decapitated, which as a rule is the second form of sacrifice. Here I heard a sailor remark: "It is just about time someone did visit this place." These were our first signs of Benin, and they did not improve our temper towards the Beni. Farther on was a small clearing, and here, their sacrifices having failed, they tried to stop us with an attack, and gave us a warm time. My good guide, Owaghi, was shot below the knee, my interpreter through the neck, and two Houssas also were wounded. Forcing on, we next met a stockade erected between two high banks through which the path ran. In front was a causeway over a ravine about twenty feet deep; in the path could be seen a gun. Sixteen pounds of gun-cotton blew the stockade literally to smithereens. Three hundred yards more brought us to a clearing, which proved to be the little village of Igba, a mile from Benin. Here we halted and brought up the guns and rocket tube to fire towards the city (whose rough direction only we knew) and served out a little water to the men who wanted it badly.

We little knew the effect those rockets were going to have in Benin. It would hardly be credited that at a mile off, and fired only in a general direction, they should have fallen into the Juju compounds. A Beni woman afterwards described what had happened,

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somewhat as follows: "The compound was thronged with people, when suddenly from the blue appeared two hissing thunderbolts into the very heart of their sacred precincts. Not a white man in sight! Yet here were two messengers from the sky. 'Truly the white men are gods,' they said, and ran panic-stricken from the place."

Four shells and three rockets were fired from this village, and on we pushed, this time with the *St. George's* seamen in front, the Houssas being rather short of ammunition, and in case of a dash being necessary, the white men were best at the front. A quarter of a mile more brought us to a warm corner, which proved to be the junction of the bush path with a broad avenue leading to the city. Something in the nature of a cannon was fired, but the stuff it was loaded with went only low down round about our boots. A few seconds brought us to the open, and how broad it seemed! Hardly more than fifty yards from bush to bush, yet after the bush path it seemed open country.

As we emerged from the bush, Benin lay out of sight to the left, just a few houses of Ochudi's compound only were visible. From the opposite bush puffs of smoke showed the presence of our old friends, and the bush on the left still had Beni in it, who were keeping up a desultory fire. About forty or fifty Beni were extended about 200 yards off across the avenue in the open between us and Benin; these fired on us as we came on. The Marines extended towards the bush opposite and fired volleys to clear it, the *St. George's* seamen took the bush on the left flank and the left-hand side of the avenue, the Houssas the

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right flanking bush and the right side of the path. The Maxim played on the men ahead, but as it had unfortunately lost its foresight in the bush, the firing was erratic and more of the enemy got away than otherwise would have been the case. Advancing up the path we had a good many losses. Captain Byrne was hit, and another Marine close to him; two others were knocked over almost on the top of each other, and several more were wounded. A guard of Marines was left with the doctors and the wounded, while the main column pushed on.

Shortly afterwards a man was seen running down waving a cloth. Firing was ceased, and in ran a Jackri boy with three cuts in his head and his ear cut in half, crying out that the Beni were murdering all their Jackri slaves, and that he had barely escaped with his life. There was nothing we could do to help them except to push on. Ahead was a large building with some guns mounted in front, behind which two or three men were running about evidently trying to persuade them to go off. At last one did, sending an odd collection of bullets and old metal about us, wounding Mr. Johnson, the gunner of the *Phœbe*. One cheer and a rush and we were up to the building, which we found was unoccupied, as were the compounds behind it. The enemy had all gone, and luckily for us they had, for a further investigation of the king's compound showed that had they held it they might have given us a bad time. The rockets had done their work well by creating a real funk of the white man. Having posted sentries, we were able to rest and wait for the rear-guard. On further acquaintance we found the town quite

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deserted, every inhabitant had decamped. Shortly after the expedition I wrote the following descripton of Benin city :

Benin is an irregular straggling town, formed by groups of houses separated from each other by patches of bush. It is perhaps a mile and a half long from east to west, and a mile from north to south. Entering from the direction of Ologbo through a grass avenue flanked with bush, a few houses are seen on the left ; these run well back into the bush, and form quite a large village ; they belonged to a general called Ochudi, and the village was known as Ochudi's compound.

Houses then straggle along the left side, till high red clay walls are encountered, with a galvanised-iron roof sloping outwards from the northern wall. This is the main entrance to the king's compound. In this compound, or village, are the Juju compounds, Palaver House, King's House, and many houses for the king's immediate followers and the Juju priests. It was in these Juju compounds that the chief sacrifices were carried out. To describe one of these Juju places will be to describe them all, as they only differed in position and size.

These spaces were about a hundred and fifty yards long, and about sixty yards broad, surrounded by a high wall, and covered with a short brown grass. At one end was a long shed running the whole breadth of the enclosure, and under this was the altar. The altar was made by three steps running the whole length under the shelter of the shed, raised slightly higher for some distance in the centre ; on this raised portion were handsomely carved ivory tusks placed on the top of

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very antique bronze heads. Near these tusks were carved clubs, undoubtedly for use upon the victims of the sacrifices. The altar was deluged in blood, the smell of which was too overpowering for many of us. This same awful smell seemed to pervade the whole compound, as if the grass had been watered with blood. In the centre of several of these Juju places was an iron erection like a huge candelabra with sharp hooks. Its purpose was not known, but it is probable that it was some instrument of torture, or for hanging portions of the victims on. In most of the Juju compounds was a pit for the reception of the bodies.

The one lasting remembrance of Benin in my mind is its smells. To crucifixions, human sacrifices, and every horror the eye could to a large extent get accustomed, but the smells no white man's internal economy could stand. Four times in one day I was practically sick from them, and many more times on the point of being so. It seemed as if every person who was able had indulged in a human sacrifice, and those who could not, sacrificed some animal and left the remains in front of his house. After a day or so the whole town resembled one huge pest-house.

And those pits! Who could describe them? Out of one a Jackri boy was pulled with drag ropes from under several corpses. He said he had been in five days; but it is incredible that he could have lived so long a time in such a place; one day, or two at the outside, must have killed even a black man.

Blood was everywhere; smeared over bronzes, ivory, and even the walls, and spoke the history of that

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BUSH FIGHTING.

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awful city in a clearer way than writing ever could. And this had been going on for centuries! Not the lust of one king, not the climax of a bloody reign, but the religion (save the word!) of a race. The Benin Juju held sway for a hundred miles all round, so that in the older and more flourishing times of the city these sacrifices must have been practised with greater intensity even than at a later date.

Human sacrifice undoubtedly differs in criminal degree, as do the various grades of every other barbaric custom. It should be remembered that no one blames Abraham for his attempted sacrifice of Isaac, doing it with sorrow from absolutely conscientious motives, and cases still remain where the blame to the individual may be looked on as comparatively small. For instance, it is not uncommon in some parts of Africa for a chief to kill a slave to take a message to his father in the land of shades. On these occasions a slave is sent for and given the message, and told when he reaches the next world to give it to the chief's father. The slave repeats the message, absolutely believing that when he dies he will find the old chief, give him the message, and then enter his service in the far-off world. He is then killed, quite willingly and peaceably. Again, the killing of wives and slaves to accompany a dead man to the next world is not without its redeeming side! But the atrocities of Benin, the savage love of mutilation and torture and the wholesale manner in which the caprices of the king and Juju were satisfied, could only have been the result of centuries of stagnant brutality.

Behind the three main Juju compounds lay the Palaver and the King's Houses side by side. The former

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was a large oblong building, roofed over the side and end walls, leaving the centre open. The roof was of galvanised iron, and down the south portion of it ran a huge bronze serpent, with a most forbidding-looking head. Red mud seats ran round the walls, for the use of the chiefs taking part in the palaver. The doors were covered with stamped brass, as also were portions of the woodwork of the roof. The King's House was almost identical, but smaller, and had rooms leading off it; the archway over the king's sleeping-place was decorated roughly with stamped brass and squares of looking-glass.

The store-houses contained chiefly cheap rubbish, such as glass walking-sticks, old uniforms, absurd umbrellas, and the usual cheap finery that traders use to tickle the fancy of the natives. But in one house, buried in the dirt of ages, were several score of unique bronze plaques, suggestive of Egyptian design, and really superbly cast. These castings of wonderful delicacy of detail were probably made by the "*cire perdue*" process. How and when the art was acquired is a mystery.

Some magnificently carved tusks were collected; in one well forty-one tusks were discovered, but in the majority of cases the ivory was dead from age, very few of modern date were to be seen, and those mostly uncarved. Silver there was none, and gold there was none, and the coral was of little value; in fact, the only things of value were the tusks and bronzework. Of other ivory carvings, some bracelets suggestive of Chinese work and two magnificent leopards were the chief articles of note; bronze groups of idols and two large and beautifully worked

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stools were also found, and must have been of very old manufacture.

Immediately in front of the compound, facing north, there was a clear space, forming, so to speak, the delta of the road leading to the water at Ikpoba. On the right was a crucifixion tree, on which was a double crucifixion, the two poor wretches stretched out facing the west with their arms bound together in the middle. The construction of this tree was peculiar, being absolutely built for the purpose of crucifixion; at the base were skulls and bones, literally strewn about, the debris of former sacrifices. The other crucifixion tree was used for single crucifixions only, and here a woman was crucified, and again the green shrubs at the base of the tree were strewn with bones and skulls. Down the avenue to the right was a tree under which were nineteen skulls, the result of more or less recent murders, and down every main road were two or more human sacrifices.

A huge piece of land ran away to the left, which seems to have been the common burial place of the town—that is, if merely laying down a dead body or at the most wrapping it in a piece of matting can be called burial. Hundreds of human remains must have been here in every stage of decomposition, from the newly dead to the mouldering skull. It was a ghastly walk, guarded at the far end by a headless sacrifice of a huge man. It is useless to continue describing the horrors of the place—everywhere death, barbarity, and blood, and smells so vile that it hardly seemed right for human beings to smell them and yet to live.

And yet the town was not without its beauty of a

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sort. There were plenty of trees surrounded by green bush, the houses were built in no set fashion, but each compound was surrounded by its own bushes and shady avenues. It seemed a place suggestive of peace and plenty.

A description of Benin would not be complete without mention of the water path, the road to the river from which the whole water supply of the town is obtained. Starting from the king's compound, we passed the large crucifixion tree on the right, and walked for three-quarters of a mile down a broad avenue with bush each side and occasional houses belonging to the poorer classes who lived on the north side of the main road. The avenue suddenly ended, and in front appeared a narrow ditch going almost straight down into the ground; along this we passed, the sides rising almost perpendicularly overhead to a height of some twenty feet, with the bottom so narrow that there was barely room for the sole of a boot. This mere track in the rock must have been worn by countless feet treading the same exact line for centuries past.

Above on the banks was dense bush, the foliage of the trees nearly meeting overhead. The path was an ideal place for an ambush, and one from which escape would be impossible, especially in case of a panic among the carriers. After about half a mile the path broadened, and then a second dip came, similar to the first, the narrow part continuing for a quarter of a mile, and then broadening out into a shady avenue, till the small village of Ikpoba was passed on the right, and the water seen ahead. The nature of this stream was a subject about which we had been more bothered to

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obtain information than any other: by some native accounts it was twenty yards broad; by others, quite narrow. No one knew whence it came or whither it went. If it were navigable, it meant a short and easy road to the city, and a comfortable way by which to send back the sick and wounded. But no native had the slightest idea whether it was the source of the Ologbo Creek itself or a tributary of it, or whether it turned and ran in a contrary direction. A very short examination showed it to be unnavigable, and that the wounded would have to be jolted back twenty-one miles in hammocks, poor fellows! The stream was only three or four yards wide, full of snags, and with a strong current against which a canoe could not ascend.

At Ikpoba it broadened out into a pool some twenty yards wide, quite shallow, but in the centre it was about six feet deep with a nice sandy bottom, an ideal place for a bathe. There were also the remains of a bridge which once had been a fine piece of native work, but had fallen into irretrievable disrepair. The water was excellent; in fact it is said that the Ikpoba water, carried down from the old city in demijohns, used to be sold in New Benin, sixty miles away, as a luxury. To us it certainly was one—and that bath in the cool; running water, the first for many days, was a thing not lightly forgotten.

There is not much more in Benin to describe. Ojumo's compound at the extreme west end was merely a small village, placed just where the Gwato road led into the main avenue. It was a queer remnant of the old military days of Benin, having the two great generals Ojumo and Ochudi each guarding

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one end of the town where the main roads from Gwato and Sapobar led in.

The surrounding country appeared to have been raided by the Beni, with some success, in their hunts for victims and slaves. Two Accra boys were found with their hands shackled to a log. These had been captured while gathering rubber in the Mahun country. Two other Jackri men were also found, one of whom was about to be sacrificed, but the "boss Juju man" said his head was a bad shape, and would bring bad luck to the city; so he got off on that occasion, deeply grateful for the fact that phrenology was to some extent studied at Benin.

On the evening we arrived a Beni came in and asked for Captain Gallway. He was supposed to be a messenger from the king, although from his costume and hair-dressing he evidently was not a king's messenger. However, it turned out he was merely a private Beni gentleman who had heard the English had arrived and turned in to have a conversation with us, asking for Captain Gallway, whose name he knew from the former expedition. The Admiral and Mr. Moor interviewed him, cross-examining him as to the movements of the king. After a question or two it was evident that he was indifferent as to whether he spoke the truth or not, so he was made to "chop Juju."

Now "chopping Juju" is equivalent to taking an oath of friendship, and is about the most serious performance indulged in by natives of these parts. There are many ways of doing it, but its essential feature is the eating by two persons of portions of the same fruit or vegetable, and then making some declaration.

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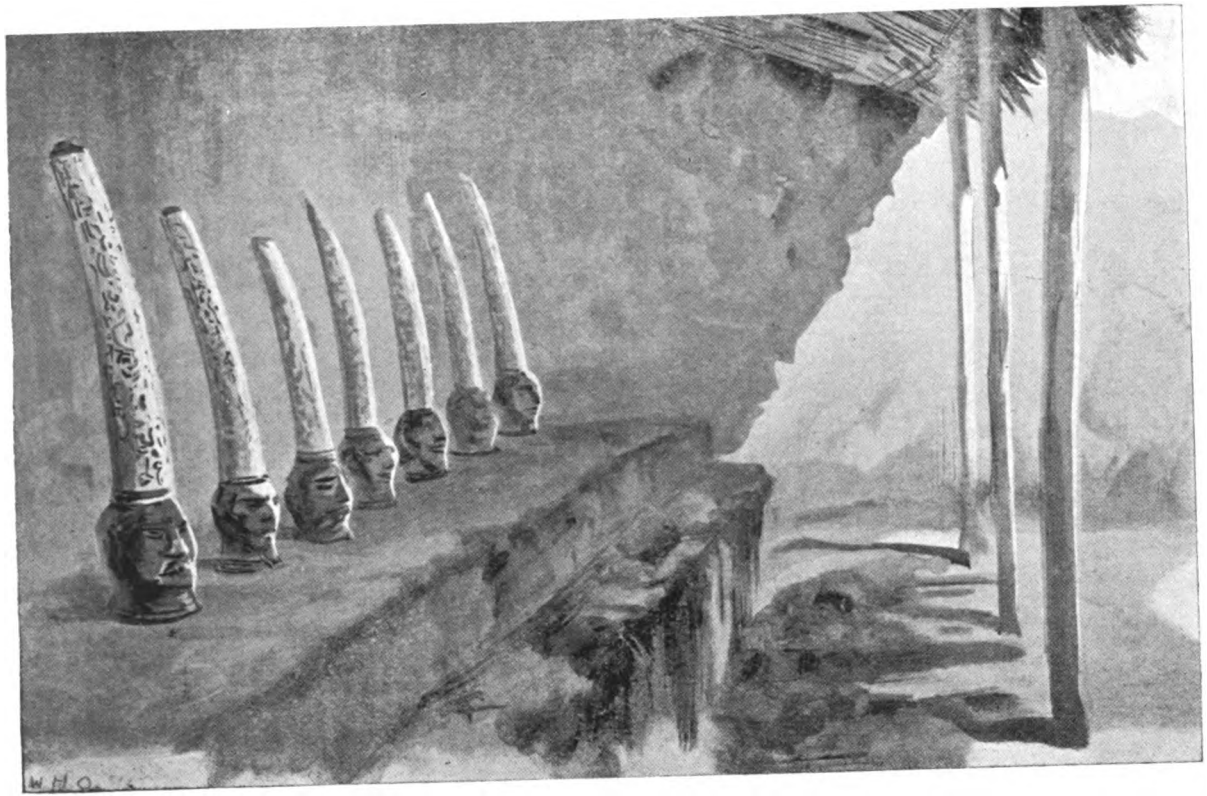

214] JUJU HOUSE AT BENIN.

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This particular ceremony was performed with a kola nut, placed on a brass tray with water poured on it; the native then touched himself with the water, and nut, and ate part of it, the other part being eaten by Mr. Turner, who eventually was going to take over the duties of English Commissioner in the town. The native then declared he would "speak true mouth" with the white man and be the white man's brother and always be honest with him, etc. etc. Having chopped Juju, I believe he spoke the truth, but he was the most evil-looking individual that could well be imagined. Dark copper colour, almond eyes, flat nose, and a mouth that turned up at the corners gave him a diabolical expression, while his shifty glances seemed to be scanning everything but the person to whom he was talking.

As a lesson to the Beni we burned the compounds of the two generals Ochudi and Ojumo and also that of the queen-mother, known to be a bad woman. The whole of the next day we were busy demolishing houses to make the king's compound tenable from a military point of view by the few troops that it was proposed to leave behind. On Sunday, 21st, the usual demolitions were proceeded with and a good deal of work done. It was our last day in Benin, and none of us were sorry, except for the Protectorate officers who were to remain with the Houssas to settle the country.

The early part of the day was quite uneventful, and we were preparing for a grand parade at 4 o'clock, at which time the colours were to be hoisted and three cheers given for the Queen, when an alarm of fire was raised, and sure enough smoke was seen coming from the thatch of a roof, about three hundred yards off.

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The Admiral took in the position at a glance; there was nothing to be done but to save all we could, prevent panic, and let the fire burn itself out. The sick were carried from the Palaver House, which was luckily roofed with zinc and not thatched, and therefore gave more chance to the rescuers, and the gunpowder, of which there were twenty-five kegs, and the ammunition were carried well out into the open.

"Wildfire" is the only term for describing the rapidity with which the flames spread. The first uprush of heated air caused a miniature whirlwind which fanned the flames and carried blazing brands to roof after roof. The air was filled with a thin black smoke which gusts of wind swept in every direction, curling and wreathing it in fantastic shapes. Soon everything seemed in a blaze; brands swept by the wind missed whole compounds and lighted roofs two hundred yards away. The heat was great, due to the volume of the flame caused by the dryness of the thatch, and the smoke, full of finely divided ash, irritated the eyes and throat. The gusts of this impromptu cyclone swept through the carrier and Houssa compounds, fanning the smouldering camp-fires into a blaze, and setting fire to the clothing and food that the carriers had left behind them in their flight; till, looking through the sweeping haze of smoke, it seemed as if the ground itself had caught fire and was burning. There was a dim grandeur about it all, and also there seemed to be a fate. Here was this head-centre of iniquity, spared by us from its suitable end of burning, for the sake of holding the new seat of justice where barbarism had held sway. It had been given into our hands with the brand of blood soaked into every corner and relic

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which fire only could purge. Here, on our last day, we were to see its legitimate fate overtake it, and, against our wishes, to see this centre of bloodshed burn before our eyes in retribution for the countless lives that had been wilfully sacrificed within its precincts.

The smoke from the smouldering roofs gradually cleared, and the whole place seemed fresher and more healthy for its purging. We had now to assess our losses. A large quantity of our provisions and nearly all our personal effects were the most important. Personally I lost everything except what I stood in, and my blanket, which consisted of four holes joined together by very little material.

On the following day we said good-bye to Benin, marching the twenty-two miles back to Ologbo the same day, and on to Sapele on the morrow, where the embarkation of the men was at once proceeded with, in order that they should all be on board ship before the inevitable malaria broke out. The first cases of fever occurred immediately afterwards, and all the way back to Malta the number of patients increased on board the *Theseus* and *Forte*. In the end the *Theseus* had so many cases that she had to be sent to England to be paid off. The *Forte*, unfortunately, was for the moment not so bad, for instead of paying off she remained in the Mediterranean, and during the next year had nearly double the number of cases of fever that she had men in her complement. For not only had she a bad epidemic of the old malaria, but her men were debilitated, and fell easy victims to the ordinary Mediterranean fever and also to a severe epidemic of typhoid contracted during a visit to the Piraeus.

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The Benin expedition was a good example of a swift and sure stroke well delivered and superbly organised. In twenty-nine days a force of twelve hundred fighting men was collected from places at distances varying between three thousand and four thousand miles, organised, provisioned, and landed. Benin was taken after five days' fighting, or thirty-four days after the first telegram ordering the expedition had been sent out from the Admiralty; or thirty-nine days after the first news reached the Commander-in-Chief, and only forty-five days after the massacre of Phillips's expedition. The retribution was swift.

Twelve days after Benin was taken the sailors had been marched back, re-embarked, and sent down the river; and the ships had been coaled and were ready for any further service.

The total casualties for the whole expedition were only ten killed, forty-seven wounded, and five deaths from climatic causes.

After the Benin expedition we returned to Malta, and sent most of our invalids to hospital. I went for a few days to Taormina. While there I developed malaria and at once made the best of my way back to Malta. At Syracuse I spent a night I shall never forget. I had a high temperature, with vinegar bandages on a head that ached with great intensity. The mosquitoes swarmed in dozens, got drunk on the vinegar and then tottered about my face. Every time I slapped and killed a mosquito my headache responded in a vigorous way. However, I soon got well after returning to Malta, but every spring for seven years afterwards I had a return of the fever, the attacks becoming less in intensity until they ceased.

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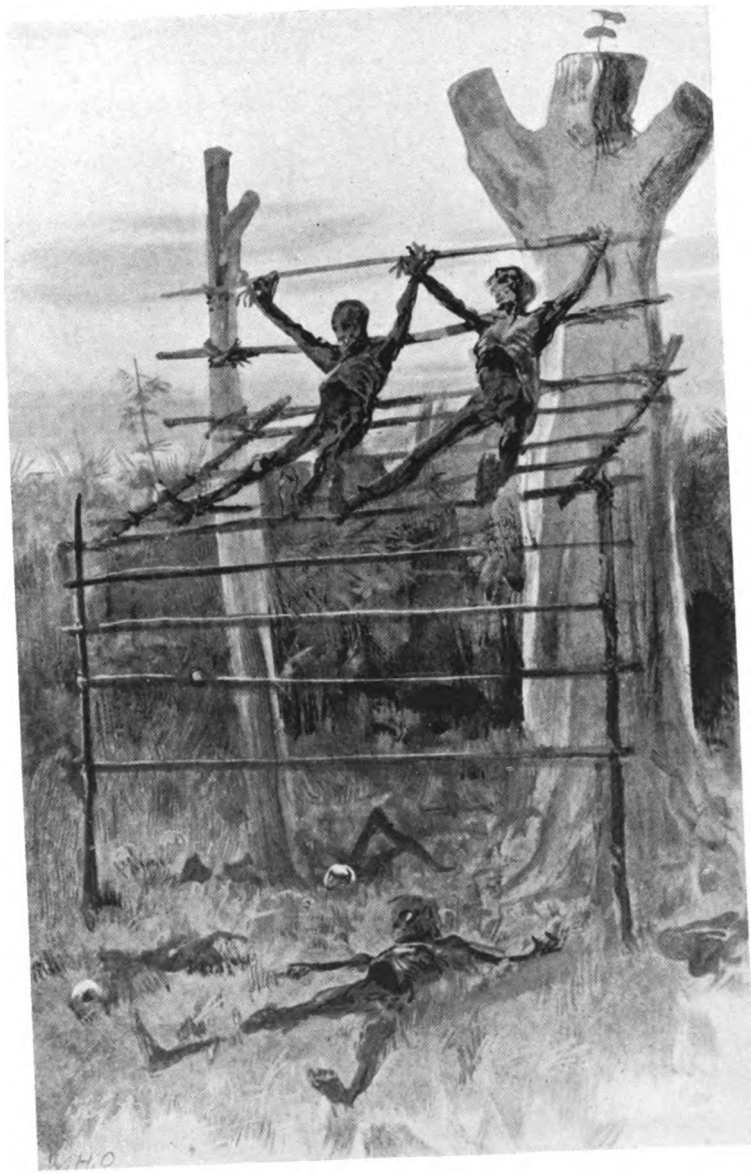

THE CRUCIFIXION TREE.

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As our men could not shake off the fever, it was decided to send us home to pay off. Captain Campbell was appointed to the *Empress of India*, and asked me to go with him, so I left the *Theseus*—which remained in commission till after the second Jubilee Review at Spithead—and started in to shake a new ship's company into shape. After the review the *Empress of India* joined the Mediterranean Fleet.

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CHAPTER XIV

1897–1900

H.M.S. "EMPRESS OF INDIA"—CRETE MASSACRES

Cretan massacres—Sir Gerard Noel—His action—International Court Martial—Captain Berger—His methods—Athene—Identifying murderers—"Scrub 'ard, darkie"—The executions—Anchorage off Kandia—Suddenness of gales—A bad day—Man overboard—Accident to the tiller—Gallantry of Lieutenant Lowry—Repairing damages—Steamboat adrift—Wreck of a mail steamer—Attempt at salvage—Caught ashore in a gale—The *Aquarius*—Difficulties in distilling—Successfully overcome—Missing stores—Cured by a parson—Shooting in Crete—Roggia—A local governor—A prisoner of war—His sad fate.

In October 1898 we were suddenly ordered to Crete on account of certain massacres that had taken place. Some of the Moslems had risen without warning and murdered fifty or sixty Christians including the British Vice-Consul and his family. No attempt had been made by the Turkish authorities to stop the riot and protect life; neither did the battleship at Kandia nor our troops ashore assist in preserving order. The officers and men of the *Hazard*, a small gunboat, anchored in-shore, did their best, and her boats' crews did good work in bringing off refugees.

Rear-Admiral Sir Gerard Noel, the Second-in-Command of the Mediterranean Fleet, was at once ordered to Kandia in the *Revenge*, and, as events proved, no better man for the work could have been chosen. On his arrival he sent a message to the Governor to come on board his flagship immediately, otherwise

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his official residence would be bombarded. The Governor tried hard to wriggle, but was obliged to come. On arrival he was received without any guard of honour and conducted to the Admiral's cabin. While standing—for he was not even asked to sit down—an ultimatum was read to him which informed him that by six o'clock that evening the ringleaders of the massacre were to be delivered to a guard that would be waiting on the quay, that if this were not complied with, his official residence would be reduced to ruins by the guns of the Fleet, and the Admiral would take over the administration of the town. Vainly the Governor, Turk-like, tried to temporise, saying that he did not know any of the ringleaders, he wanted more time to make inquiries, etc. etc. It was of no use; he at last saw that in Gerard Noel he had a man who evidently intended to carry out his threat to the letter. According to eye-witnesses, he, the Governor of Kandia, left the Admiral's cabin wiping the perspiration off his forehead with his fez!

That afternoon a guard was sent to the quay to await the arrival of the prisoners. Five o'clock came, but no signs, half-past five, still nothing, so the *Revenge* cleared for action and her guns were trained on the shore. At five minutes to six the first of a queue of prisoners appeared at the mole end, and the fact was signalled to the *Revenge* just in time to prevent her opening fire. The prisoners were then embarked and distributed among the various ships. On our arrival we received forty, and accommodated them below decks, behind screens made by hanging up the steel nets of our anti-torpedo defence.

The problem of obtaining evidence on which to

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convict the culprits was not a simple one. Great care had to be exercised, since it was quite possible that the prisoners who had been sent on board might merely have been men the Governor wished to get rid of. It was decided to try the men by an International Court Martial on which the various nations taking an interest in Crete, France, Italy, and our own, were represented. Captain Berger of the Infanterie de la Marine was appointed prosecutor, or rather Juge d'Instruction. I never met a man who was more able at that class of work, he was perfectly splendid; any Englishman would have failed utterly and completely, especially had he been learned in our law. The most fatal thing to have done would have been to assume any prisoner innocent. The only chance of success lay in examining each prisoner separately in the French style, mingling suggestion with facts, convincing him that everything was known about his doings, getting one man to give evidence implicating another, and so to wring from them clues that could be followed up. The French system for unravelling a complex case was fully vindicated. The interrogations that went on were somewhat of this nature:

"Where were you, Mahomed Jones, the day of the massacre?"

"I was very ill and stayed in bed all day."

"Well, Mustapha Smith says he saw you in the street kill a Christian!"

"Oh, that rascal Mustapha Smith he lies—may dogs eat him! To show that he lies I tell you that out of the window I saw him enter the shop of Benhagi and kill him and bring away his silver goods, and now he wants to put the blame on me."

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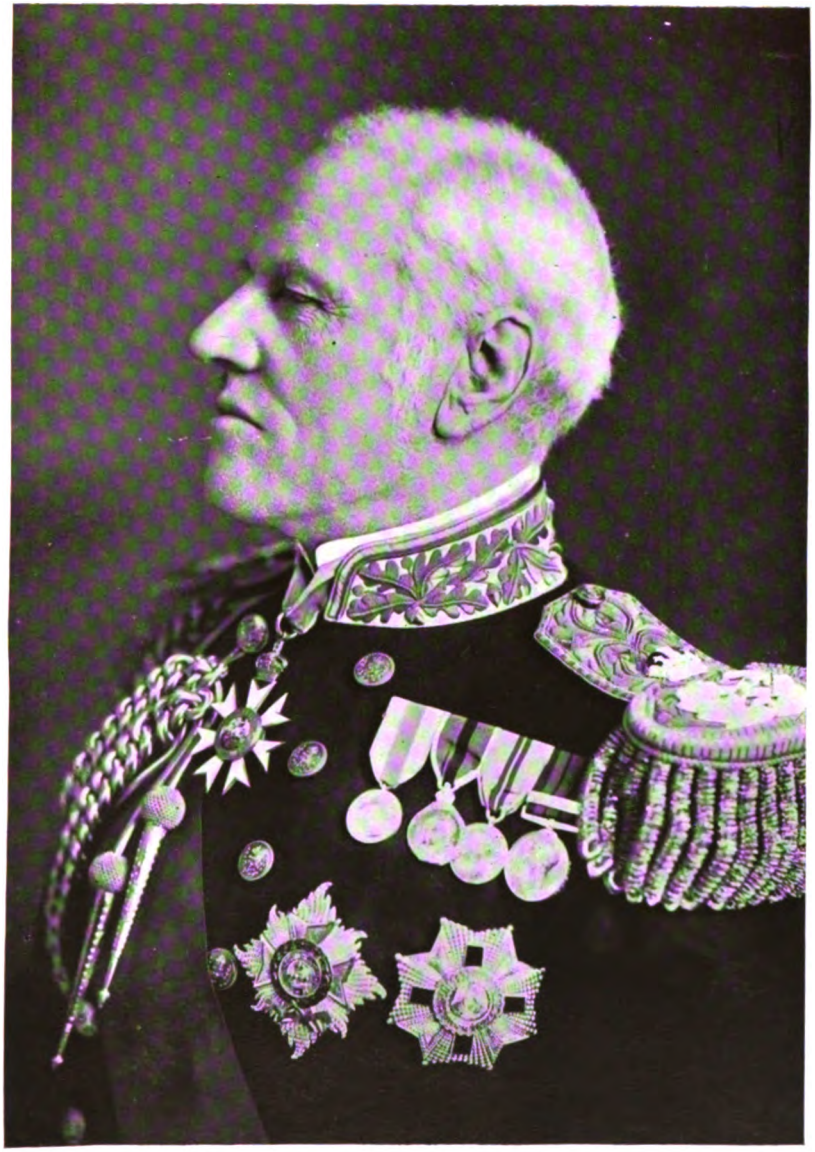

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET, SIR GERARD NOEL, G.C.M.G.

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"You know that it is you that are lying, not Mustapha Smith!"

"To show you I am not, I tell you where he hid the silver things," etc. etc.

Then Mustapha Smith would be examined and confronted with Mahomed Jones's evidence, with the result that he would give away Mahomed Jones. So piece by piece evidence was procured, the innocent were liberated, and the guilty tried and convicted.

The most dramatic scene I ever saw on board any ship took place at Kandia; it happened in this wise. At the time of the massacre a special raid was made on the houses of the British Vice-Consul, who was also a moneylender,[1] and on that of his sister. One of her servants was a young girl called Athene. When the massacre started, and after she had seen the first person killed, she fainted, fell down, and the bodies of the other women as they were murdered covered her, so she was left as dead. Later on she came to, dragged herself from under the corpses, and, finding that she was alone in the house, crept to the window and watched. Presently she saw a young Turkish officer, whom she had previously known, pass below; she called to him, and he arranged to smuggle her away after dark from the town into the country to the villa of a friend, where she was subsequently unearthed by the indefatigable Captain Berger. After persuasion, she consented to come on board and try to identify some of the assassins.

[1] No small part of the reason of the massacre was due to this fact. Our Foreign Office at that time was most careless as regards the appointments of Vice-Consuls.

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The day she was escorted on board was fine, and all our forty ruffians were fallen in in two ranks on the quarter-deck for her inspection. She was small, good looking, and intensely pale; this without doubt was due to her late experience, and the strain on her nerves from anticipation of the ordeal she was about to undergo.

Slowly she moved down the line, scanning the ruffianly faces. Twice she stopped with a small scream as she identified two of the scoundrels who had taken part in the terrible drama she had witnessed at her late home. The faces of the two accused were a study, their scowls being compounded of fear, hatred, and despair.

At the end of her inspection the poor little thing nearly fainted from the strain she had undergone. Both the men identified were eventually found guilty and hanged.

The places down below which we used as extempore prisons were kept scrubbed by the prisoners. For this purpose they were placed in charge of the "Boatswain's mate of the flats," a cheery little person who did not waste much sympathy on the ruffians as he urged them to scrub well and hard. In fact he was overheard one day cheering on one of them, a negro, who had been closely connected with the beef supply to the troops and therefore knew some English, by saying: "Scrub 'ard, darkie, scrub 'ard, you'll be hanged o' Monday," and so he was.

On the day of the first executions the weather was bad, it was blowing fresh from the northward and the accommodation ladders could not be kept out; the criminals had to be got into the boats over the sterns

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of the ships, after first having had their death sentences read to them on the quarter-deck. They laughed and did not think it was true that they would be hanged, nor did they believe it to be possible that at last supine England was represented not by a halting politician groping by the dim light of expediency, but by a man who knew how to carry out the promises of protecting a Christian population in Turkey which had so often been made and as often ignored. They only realised the fact that they had Gerard Noel to deal with when they came on to the ramparts and saw the gallows. Then some of them, with Moslem fear of the penalties exacted in a future existence from those who had died by hanging, tried to throw themselves over the rampart in order to avoid so dreaded a form of execution.

The Governor protested that he could not be responsible for the safety of the Christian population if the hanging were carried out; but Sir Gerard Noel, with his guns on the Konak,[1] replied that he would be well advised to try his best to prevent any riot, as he would be held responsible for any disturbance. So the guilty were hanged, with a paper on their breasts setting forth their crimes, and were left hanging till sunset, when their relations were allowed to take their bodies away. After this no one of the population dared to lift a little finger against the English, whereas three weeks before the prestige of an Englishman had fallen in public estimation to be a little lower than that of a dog.

Although Kandia was the principal town in Crete, the anchorage off the port was a bad one, being dead

[1] The Konak was the governor's house.

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open to the northward. Probably it is the worst place in the whole Mediterranean for a ship to lie. In winter-time gales sprang up without warning and grew in intensity with amazing rapidity. At first I was apt to be caught napping through not having taken special precautions, but after a season off Kandia a wary commander left nothing to chance. If ever I had been Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, I would have made every ship in turn spend a winter off Kandia simply for instructional purposes.

I will give one example of the rapidity with which gales and the accompanying sea get up. Whenever one of our large steamboats was hoisted out, I kept a stoker in her all night and steam ready in her at short notice; the remainder of her crew slept together, and apart from the rest of the ship's company, so that they could be called without difficulty in case of necessity. My cabin was on the upper deck, and one night I woke at about 3 a.m. by hearing rain. I got up, slipped on a jacket and trousers, and went out on deck. It was raining "cats and dogs," with just a light breeze coming from the northward, but the sea was smooth. I suspected evil and gave orders to man the steamboat, but before all the men could get into her so heavy a sea had risen that the last man was unable to get from the boom into the boat. I turned out the watch and only just got the accommodation ladders triced up in time to prevent them being washed away, all this in some quarter of an hour or so.

About ten miles away was a small island called Standia; in this was a landlocked harbour just large enough for a battleship to anchor and swing round. To this we used to run when the weather off Kandia

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proved too bad for us to remain in that open anchorage.

The worst day off Kandia, in fact the worst day of my time as a Commander, really deserves a description. A gale had sprung up in the morning and about 8 o'clock it showed signs of developing into a really bad one; the sea had got up and was running so high that the ship was rolling some seven or eight degrees at anchor. The Captain was a believer in anchors, whereas personally I hated having more than one anchor down in bad weather in a modern ship. Every additional anchor that was dropped merely meant additional delay in case of having to clear out and go to sea. The use of anchors in this way is merely a relic of old sailing-ship days when it was often necessary to ride out a gale at anchor if a storm sprang up with the ship moored off a lee shore. Anyhow, we dropped a second anchor, but soon the ship began to drag, so down went the third, and orders were given to raise steam as quickly as possible. The chief engineer, Gay, a great friend of mine, came to me and said, "What is it, Commander?" I said, "Look here, if you do not have steam up in those old kettles of yours within two hours we will be ashore."[1] We always had steam up in one boiler for working the electric light and for distilling fresh water, and fortunately, the night before, we had changed from one boiler to another and therefore had a second one well warmed up, so were able to use the steam in both of these to warm the engines and work the auxiliary machinery while raising steam in the remainder. I had got the large steamboat away

[1] The usual time required for raising steam in the old cylindrical boilers was three to four hours.

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but with only one seaman and a stoker in her; she had disappeared in the early morning darkness and we heard nothing of her for three days. I feared she might have been wrecked on the beach; she, however, as a matter of fact, made the small inner harbour and rode out the gale comfortably.

Meanwhile on deck we could do nothing but wait until steam was raised, dragging nearer and nearer to the shore. As usual our chief engineer came up to the scratch and had steam up well under the two hours at the expense of some leaky tubes. We then started in to weigh our three anchors, but by this time the sea was so high that it was unsafe to work on the fo'c'sle, although this part of the ship was some twenty feet above the water.

Soon after the first anchor had been tripped a sea came in over the bow and washed the men about the fo'c'sle like corks. One young ordinary seaman was carried overboard, and Lowry, the First Lieutenant, with his usual gallantry went after him. To lower a boat meant risking the lives of thirteen more men, since if in taking the water, or in hoisting, she was broken up there would be no means of saving the crew. We were rolling considerably, and as we were at anchor there was no chance of making a lee by turning the ship and so sheltering the boat while she was being lowered and hoisted. However, it was a case when it was better to risk losing thirteen men than to leave two to drown without an attempt to save them, so I called away our racing cutter's crew to man the boat, as they were a better all-round crew than the usual one. The boat was lowered till the sea reached her bottom and lifted her in the slings, she then slipped and dropped

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[*Ch. Bucher.*

ARTHUR COLE LOWRY.

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some twelve or fourteen feet with the falling wave, but fortunately she fell clear of the ship and pulled away head to sea, drifting down to where the two men with the lifebuoy were waiting.

I may here remark that it was a really dangerous operation to lower a boat from these old battleships in a seaway without making a lee, since there were innumerable projections from the side which, when the ship rolled, threatened to tear the gunwale out of the boat. Moreover, with the ship rolling and the boat rising and falling it was very difficult for those in the boat to get a "prise" with a boat-hook or oar which would enable them to push and keep the boat away from the ship, but, thank goodness, on that occasion the boat got clear. Just as she reached the two men in the water I got a message to say that the tiller had broken adrift and was thrashing about the after compartment. But that trouble had to wait till the boat was back and hoisted. Every available man in the ship was turned up to man the boat's "falls"[1] so as to raise her quickly out of the water. Back she came slowly, plunging heavily in the sea. The moments were full of anxiety as she came alongside and her crew hooked on the purchases, since she was rising and falling nearly as high as the upper deck as successive seas swept past the ship. The order was given to hoist as she was falling with a sea—this was entirely contrary to accepted practice, but eye and common sense are worth much in emergency—this allowed the slack of the ropes to be through by the time she was at the bottom of her drop, and the boat was already moving upwards by being hoisted by

[1] The ropes by which a boat is hoisted.

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the men as the next sea rose under her and helped her to lift. Even then the slack of the purchases was not all taken through as she reached her highest point; here the sea again began to drop, and down she went till the "falls" caught her and whipped taut as harp strings, and the davits bent as if they would break. However, all went well.

I was now free to go down to the tiller-room, and there, true enough, was the great four-ton, twenty-foot tiller thrashing from side to side, tearing the tiller chains through their sheaves. Unfortunately one of the parallel arms, six inches in diameter, had snapped, which allowed two things to happen: first the other arm pushed the tiller forward and allowed it to hammer against the watertight bulk-head, but, fortunately, not sufficiently to break it through; and secondly, the rudder head was allowed far more play than was normally the case, with the result that the locking plate on the rudder head cut through the ship's side-plating and allowed water to rush into the compartment. All we could now do was to close the watertight door and leave things as they were.

The next item on the programme arranged for us by the fates came in a message that the port anchor hanging at the bows was trying to break through the plating into the paint-room. I felt rather like Job must have felt as each messenger brought him news of fresh disasters. The paint-room, however, was a small compartment, which even if it flooded would not endanger the ship, but I had the anchor lowered till it was below the bottom. We had by this time all three anchors hanging at the bows and away we went, the Captain steering the ship with her propellers,

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as of course the rudder was useless, and eventually we fetched up in the harbour of Standia.

The first thing to do was to close the rent in the ship. It was in a most awkward place under the counter where we could not get a collision mat to fit closely. We, however, drove in wood wedges and oakum till the major part of the hole was closed. Then a peculiar situation developed, namely, that the water came in through the remaining leak faster than the small five-inch drain would carry it away, but not too fast to be manageable with the large pumps, if it could only be got to them. The only thing to do was to open the watertight door and let the water into the next compartment, from which it could be run into the main drain. Had we undone all the fastenings of the door, the water would have rushed through in a wave eight feet high and would have swept everyone in the next compartment into the main drain. We therefore shored up the bottom and centre of the door with timber and knocked back the top "dogs" that kept it closed. The pressure of the water then bent back the top part and let a flood of water through the gap thus formed. When the compartment had emptied itself to the level of the bottom of this gap, we shored up the top and opened the bottom of the door, so controlling the flow while the compartment emptied. We then drilled and tapped holes round the rent in the ship's plating and covered the hole with a plate on the inside. Then came the repairing of the tiller, which fell to my lot at the request of the chief engineer, as it necessitated lifting heavy weights in a confined space. The temporary repairs proving satisfactory, we went to Malta for a thorough overhaul.

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Another occasion of excitement in the earlier days at Kandia was when we were caught by one of these sudden gales coming on with the steam pinnace at the boom. We got a hawser in to her and then veered her astern under the lee made by the ship. As the gale increased we had to weigh and go over to Standia towing her on our lee quarter. She seemed to ride quite happily, but suddenly the hawser parted and away she drifted in the gale with only just steam enough to move the engines. We were only about three miles off the shore, and as the surf began to break about half a mile from the land it seemed that half an hour or so would see her stranded. I asked the Captain to lower the seaboat so as to take off her crew, since if she grounded out in the open they would in all probability be drowned. I went away in her and found the sea was so high that we could only get occasional glimpses of the steamboat as we each topped a wave. On and on we went, never seeming to get nearer to her; at last we got near to the breakers not far from the inner harbour, and I came to the conclusion that if she had had enough steam to wriggle away from us she ought to fetch the harbour, and therefore turned the boat head to sea to pull back towards the ship. Now turning a boat in a heavy sea is a ticklish business, as there is a good chance, when the sea comes abeam, of taking in enough water to sink the boat; so a favourable moment must be waited for when a smaller sea than usual comes along. We could not wait too long, as we were near the shore, so taking a medium chance I turned. We took in quite enough water, it being well over our ankles in the stern sheets; constant baling, however, got rid of it as well as of the spray that came in with

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each plunge. In the hollow of the waves we made good progress, but the "send" on the crests sent us back a bit. Captain Campbell came in as close as he dared and gave us a lee. When alongside we rose nearly to the height of the upper deck before falling again into the depths as the ship rolled and the sea fell. However, the hoisting gear was good and we got up without accident.

During one of these gales a Greek mail and cargo steamer parted her cable and went ashore. I got permission from the underwriters to try to salve her. We took one of the steam fire pumps from our ship, hung it over the main hold and joined it up to her donkey boiler with flexible steam pipes. After a few hours we pumped her out dry, but found inside her bottom considerable quantities of sand and some pebbles as big as a fist. This looked bad, as it argued that there must have been some good-sized holes somewhere. In pricking about the sand with a pricker to find the bottom I broke through the sealing of sand which was keeping out the water and in came the water and filled her again. She was an old iron ship and her bottom had crumpled up on grounding. The last I saw of her engine-room after a second gale was that the engines were standing unmoved while the hull lurched about them; good evidence that the sides of the ship were no longer connected to her bottom.

This second gale was a memorable one to all of us who were working in the wreck on that night, since we got left ashore. It was a beautiful night, but about midnight rain suddenly came on. I called everyone up from below into the steamboat, which was lying on the inshore side of the wreck; but by the time

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we got the boat clear and away it was blowing hard, and before we had steamed half a mile the sea had got up so much that it was impossible to reach the ship and we had to make the inner harbour instead. The officers of the Rifle Brigade kindly put us up for the night.

The scene from the harbour next morning was very fine. It was blowing a whole gale. And the heavy seas, in dashing on to the outside of the breakwater, sent up masses of foam which blew across the harbour like flakes in a snowstorm. Looking through the harbour entrance, the rollers were so large that in receding they left the ground at the bottom of the sea exposed to view before the next wave curled over and filled the void once more. Luckily the gale did not last long, and that night once more saw us on board the *Empress*, but it settled for good and all the fate of the wreck on the beach.

Our troops at Kandia were supplied with water by an aqueduct from the hills. If this had been destroyed either by the Turks or the insurgents, our men would have been without water, and therefore in an awkward predicament. A small steamer called the *Aquarius* was hastily taken up, converted into a distilling ship, and sent out to Kandia. She was quite unsuited to the work; her previous cargoes had been evil-smelling and had been carried in the hold, which it was now intended to use as a reserve tank for the fresh water, with a result that it was some weeks before it could be washed out sufficiently to be used to store drinking water. When this was done she was berthed in the harbour, but consistently refused to distil any water that was fit to drink. Captain Campbell, who

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was senior naval officer, appointed a committe to inquire into the best way of improving matters. After much deliberation they reported that it was impossible for the ship to make water fit to drink.

When taking the advanced course at Greenwich I had studied water analysis, and from what I had learned was convinced that it was simply a case of the original water inside the harbour being so contaminated with sewage that the steam during distillation became saturated with gases decomposed from the vegetable matter by heat during the process, and that inodorous water could be distilled if reasonably clean water was supplied to the boiler. I asked to be allowed to try to make her distil properly and was given only three days in which to do so, as the Captain was very loath to delay sending in his report that the ship was useless. Moreover, it was the old case of a prophet being without honour in his own country. My friend Gay came to the rescue as usual with his stores and lent me all his spare boiler tubes. I joined these together with joints made from leather hose-pipe. Then I built a small coffer-dam to fit over the inlet to the *Aquarius's* main condenser, from which place water could be pumped into the boiler by the donkey pump. The improvised boiler tube pipe-line was then laid out from the coffer-dam to the outside of the harbour so that clean sea water was pumped into the boiler, and in twenty-four hours the ship produced clean distilled water. When we left Kandia we turned over the pipe-line to our successor; but as we never again visited the place we never recovered the boiler tubes, and poor Gay had some difficulty in getting the store-account authorities to understand how he had lost some thirty or forty

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boiler tubes in supplying fresh water to the troops in Crete.

The only two methods of accounting for missing stores in the Navy is either by their being logged as "lost overboard by accident," or else "eaten by rats." The tale is often told in the Navy of a gunner who expended a brass gun, which was on his establishment, but never on board, as "eaten by rats," and how this slipped through the checking authorities at the Admiralty. Had the entry been queried it would have been one rather difficult to explain away.

In the old trooping days it was strictly forbidden for officers to take up food, soda water, etc., and supply them to other ships. Undoubtedly, had this not been insisted on, the troopships would have become store carriers. One officer I knew when in a trooper did buy and supply several dozen of soda water to a thirsty ship on a hot station. The supply was discovered at the Admiralty and queried. My friend, annoyed at what he considered an unfair query, replied that on the day in question he felt ill and considered that a soda-water bath would do him good. The same officer had a deadly feud with the Chaplain, one of the few who had not earned the respect and friendship of their messmates. My friend contracted double pneumonia and was at death's door. When he was at his worst the padre put his head in the cabin door and said: "Ah, I always told you you would come to this." The patient pulled himself together and gasped out: "You old devil, I will live to sell you," and from that moment he turned the corner and got better.

About three miles outside Kandia there was a marsh, about one hundred and fifty or two hundred acres in

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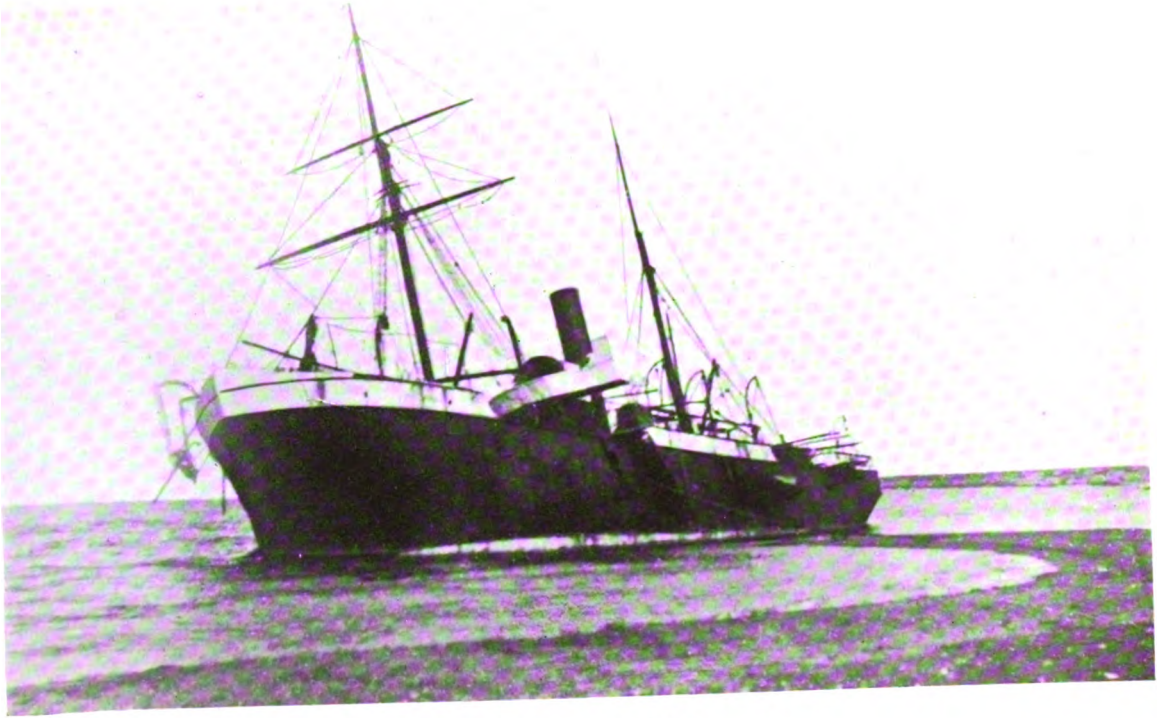

THE WRECK OFF CASIDIA.

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extent. Probably no gun had been fired in it for many years, so it was well stocked with snipe and duck, and round its margin woodcock, hares, and at times quail could be found. The *Scylla*, a small cruiser, was the only other ship there at the time, so we arranged to shoot it together, but only on three days a fortnight. Unfortunately I did not keep a record of the bags, but for the first three occasions we averaged about 150 head and then fell down to 120, then 100, and after that even we still had quite good shooting.

In the hot weather we sometimes went across the bay, if bay it could be called, to a small creek called Roggia and then climbed the hills in search of partridges. There were very few, and it meant a day of tough walking up and down-hill, but to a Commander it was a day away from the ship and absence from incessant work, small worries, and interruptions. There was no level place in that part of the island, and the valleys were merely dried watercourses, choked with dusty oleanders, the descending slope of one hill meeting the ascending slope of the next one.

The first time I landed there we came across a bell tent, and in the tent a subaltern of a line regiment. The Island of Crete had been partitioned into districts, and each district was supervised by a different nationality to preserve order. This district happened to have fallen to the English, and my friend the subaltern ruled it in the name of Queen Victoria and the British Government, and certain allied powers of Europe. While talking over current events, my friend in his shirt sleeves, for it was warm, and we in nondescript shooting attire suitable to the wilds, we were interrupted by the arrival of a Cretan some sixty-five years or more

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of age. He had some request to make, so had brought with him the forequarter of a goat grilled on a spit as a present. The subaltern listened and adjudicated, refused the offering of grilled kid, and the elder, who was chief of a neighbouring village, left satisfied. I must confess that I was mightily impressed with our national instinct for governing. Here was a boy, for he was hardly more than one in years, not long from Sandhurst, administering a district and ruling satisfactorily villages who had headmen three times his age, and who accepted his decisions as a matter of course, without question.

One problem he had been called on to settle related to a Turkish prisoner. The village headman one day came to him highly elated because the village had captured a Turkish soldier. They were anxious to know what to do with him, and were immensely proud of their captive. Some were for killing him, others for keeping him as a trophy. Of course my friend impressed on them that the soldier was a prisoner of war, and had to be properly treated, looked after and fed, pending instructions from Headquarters as to his ultimate disposal. Shortly after the headman again visited him and told him that the Headquarters had ordered them to keep the man; but he explained that the village was tired of him, chiefly because he ate a lot and had to be fed. The subaltern remarked that it was unfortunate, but that it was one of the chances of war, and he must be fed and properly treated. Some weeks after I again tumbled across the deputy governor and asked him after the Turk. He then told me that the Turk had come to a bad end. The headman came to him one morning

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apparently in great distress and said that there had been a sad accident. The Turk had expressed a great desire to bathe, so he was taken into the bay in a boat, but unfortunately he got drowned! There was of course nothing more to be said, accidents will happen—but the result of this accident was that the village no longer had to provide food for a prisoner.

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CHAPTER XV

H.M.S. "EMPRESS OF INDIA" (*continued*)

Fleet tactics—Line ahead—St. Vincent—The Nile—Trafalgar—The Boer War—The education of a seaman—Captain Hart Dyke—His adventure in Zululand—Imprisoned on his wedding night—Church and State—Scores off Accountant-General—*Renown* joins the Fleet—A naval burlesque—A blasting accident—Inspection by Sir John Fisher— A dramatic inspection—Sir John's methods—His plan regarding Dreyfus—The Chief Constructor—My association with Sir John.

In 1899 Sir John Hopkins, who had been our Commander-in-Chief, vacated the command and left us before Sir John Fisher, who was busy at the Hague Peace Conference, could join. In this interval Rear-Admiral Sir Gerard Noel took command of the Fleet. He was without any exception the greatest master of *pure* naval tactics I ever met. Naval tactics, like mathematics, can be divided into two broad classes—the *pure* and the *applied*. The pure may be taken as those used in peace-time, for cruising, entering harbour, and anchoring, and the applied as those necessary for the handling of a Fleet in war-time, either while cruising or in action. Sir Gerard handled the Fleet with a certainty and exactness that few possess. On our way from Gibraltar to the East we had several days of most interesting examples of his art. In order to encourage the study of tactics among the officers of the Fleet, he issued a general Memorandum, asking for the remarks of any officers on the evolutions. Several of us complied, assuming that the evolutions hinged on

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the disposition of cruisers in war-time, but Sir Gerard replied that he intended them merely as peace evolutions. This closed down our interest altogether, and in the future his skill, and not the manœuvres themselves, excited our admiration.

These manœuvres, however, drew me on to thinking out seriously the best formation and tactics for a Fleet action. Ideas on the subject were at this time in a state of flux. Long-range firing had opened up the possibility of fighting at ranges hitherto considered impossible. Concentration of fire was therefore rendered a less important matter than in the days of short ranges. I came to the conclusion that "line ahead" was the only formation that gave the maximum of gunfire and the greatest flexibility and simplicity of manœuvre. This idea I subsequently sent on to Sir John Fisher after he had taken command, with the three axioms resulting from it. First that the faster Fleet could select and keep the range at which they desired to fight and the slower Fleet was powerless to alter the range. Secondly, provided the faster Fleet intended to fight in line ahead and not to run away, the slower Fleet could choose the bearing on which the action was fought. Thirdly, whatever manœuvre the enemy performed in turning all his ships together, the other should at once do the same. These three simple rules governed all manœuvres in a Fleet action, and enabled an Admiral to know exactly on the spur of the moment how to reply to any manœuvre that the enemy might spring on him in the course of an action. Afterwards in 1900 at the War Course at Greenwich I used to work the tactical board on these principles against all comers, and never could my opponents

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obtain a tactical advantage by assuming any other formation than line ahead. Of course all this is now commonplace and universally accepted, but at the date of which I write this was not so.

The really extraordinary point in connection with this is that line ahead, or line of battle, was the old sailing fighting formation. Jervis used it at St. Vincent, and to preserve it tacked in *succession* instead of *together* at the time when Nelson tacked and threw himself across the bows of the weather group of Spanish ships that were trying to run down and join the lee group. Had Jervis tacked *together*, his ships would have been brought nearly into line abreast, a manœuvre that could have been used by a single ship or a few in a *mêlée*, but which would have been a bad, in fact a fatal, manœuvre for the whole Fleet to adopt.

At the Nile, Nelson departed from strict line ahead, by doubling his line—that is, by taking half of his ships on one side and half on the other side of the French Fleet that was lying at anchor. Controversy has raged as to whether Nelson or Foley conceived the idea of doubling the line. Of course it was Nelson who did it. Foley led the leading ships inside the enemy, which manœuvre was undoubtedly a brilliant conception. It owed its origin to visualising the state of the fighting decks of a ship during action when all the hamper was stowed on the non-fighting side. The guns on that side of course were not worked and their crews were used to reinforce the guns on the engaged side as well as for other purposes. Therefore by taking the ships inshore of the enemy Foley upset all their fighting arrangements, and must be given all the credit for

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this. It, however, was Nelson in the *Agamemnon* who, instead of following Foley's lead, led his ship and those behind him down the seaward or fighting side, and by so doing he doubled the line. He deliberately sacrificed the advantages of attacking the unprepared side of the ships, but seized another advantage of more lasting value, namely, of bringing two ships alongside each one of the enemy. If Foley had led his vessels the seaward side it is quite possible that Nelson might have led his the inshore side—but anyhow by not following Foley's lead, Nelson was responsible for "doubling the line."

At Trafalgar, again, Nelson followed his tactics at the Nile, adapting the principle of the concentration used by him at the battle of the Nile to the requirements of attack on a Fleet at sea. But this action must be left till I discuss the Battle of Jutland.

These departures from line of battle, however, do not affect the fact that "single line" was the orthodox formation under sail. When, however, steam became the motive power and the mobility of vessels was correspondingly increased, without the gun increasing relatively in range, the idea of grouping vessels for concentrated attack gained growth, and the principle underlying the Trafalgar tactics was accepted as the one to be copied, since a *mêlée* at short range was but one degree removed from fighting broadside to broadside. When, however, the range of gunfire increased and locomotive torpedoes were developed, fleets were forced to fight farther away from each other during an action, with a result that group formations lost all value and the fleet once more came to be looked on as a homogeneous fighting unit. Moreover, boarding be-

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came impossible and the gun reasserted itself as the paramount weapon. Hence, the best tactics were those that gave the gun the fullest possible scope. Gyrations which upset gun pointing were obviously bad, and therefore the advantages of the single line became more than ever apparent.

The South African War was in progress during the last years of the century, but as the enemy had no fleet it did not affect the Navy greatly. Naval Brigades were landed and did good service by supplementing the lighter artillery of the Army. The sailor has the reputation of being fairly adaptable, which is somewhat confirmed by the following.

An old friend of mine, whom we will call B, who was landed during the Boer War, was sitting one evening in front of his tent, when he heard the clatter of hoofs and the jingle of bits and chains approaching. He scanned the new-comers and saw that they were a mounted squad with some pompoms in tow. The leader, a Corporal, saluted him and at the same time grinned familiarly. B thought he knew the man's face, so he called his Warrant Officer and told him to go and find out where the party came from, and especially who the Corporal in charge was. The officer returned and told him the Corporal's name was Smith, a seaman in the foretop of B's ship, the *Doris*, and that he was coming round shortly. Soon Smith appeared, and not unnaturally B asked him what the dickens he was doing in the interior of Africa, on top of a horse, in army uniform, towing pompoms round the country. Smith then told him that the Army had some pompoms sent out from England and when they arrived at Cape Town no one knew how to work them, so Sir Forestier

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Walker made a signal to the Admiral to ask if there was anyone in the Fleet who knew anything about pompoms; the Admiral in turn made a signal to all the ships, and Smith sent in his name as being a pompom expert. Accordingly he was sent ashore, put into military uniform, given spurs and a horse, and rated Corporal Instructor in pompoms. B asked him how he had got on, and the Corporal Able-Seaman told him that he found riding a bit difficult at first as the horse rolled and pitched a bit, but he soon got over that. Then B said: "But how about the pompoms? What on earth did you know about them?" Smith smiled, and answered: "Lord love you, sir! I didn't know nothing, but I'm learning a lot."

Captain Campbell left us in 1899 and Captain Hart Dyke joined. Our new Captain was a man of extraordinary experiences and had a prodigious memory. He had received more than one presentation copy of Whitaker's Almanac, for correcting errors in facts and dates from memory.

I remember two of his unique personal experiences. During a period of threatened international trouble while a Lieutenant on the Cape of Good Hope station, he was given command of a merchant vessel and ordered to proceed up the coast and hoist the British flag, and so annex a certain bay on the east coast. When he arrived he found that the geographical term "bay" must have been given to that locality by some imaginative person, since the coast was long and straight and directly facing the open sea to the eastward. The result was that the heavy ocean rollers broke on the shore and created a surf, through which a landing could only be effected on one or two days in each year.

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When he arrived the surf was fairly bad, but the party managed to land, hoisted the Union Jack, and for a few hours generally explored the adjacent district. When, however, they wished to get back to the ship, they found that the surf had increased considerably and that re-embarkation was impossible. Next day the rollers were hopelessly bad and during the next few days matters grew worse and worse, as the party had no food and had to live on berries. The Captain knew that they might well be a year before a chance of re-embarkation occurred, so he signalled the ship to return to Cape Town and he and his party started a walk of several hundred miles—through an unknown country without arms or food, and only the clothes and boots they were wearing.

After some days they entered Zululand and were there made prisoners. They were taken to the kraal of the king and fairly well treated. Naturally their chief desire was to get back to civilisation, but the king appeared in no hurry to let them go; he was constantly petitioned, but always returned evasive answers. At last he showed signs of acquiescence and agreed to let them go provided they promised that the Queen of England would ransom them. The Captain with some anxiety inquired the sum in the mind of the king, since he felt a natural delicacy in case he should be left with the onus of assessing the value of himself and his party to the British Empire. It would indeed be an awkward problem to the majority of us to have to fix a sum that the tax-payer would be prepared to pay for our personal ransom. Anyhow, in this case, after much havering and delay and considerable anxiety to the

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party, the king fixed the ransom at £5. Wisely the Captain, knowing that too ready an acceptance would lead to increased demands and consequent delays, refused point-blank. "Did the king think that the great white Queen rolled in money, that she should give £5 out of her money for some six or seven of her subjects! Truly there would be serious trouble if any harm came to them, but £5! No, let him reconsider his demand." But the king stuck to his price, and in the end a deed was made out and signed and permission to depart was given. As a parting shot, however, the king deprived the whole party of their clothes and sent them forth on their journey clad only in their birthday frocks, and down through Zululand without clothes or boots they walked. At night they were so cold they had to sleep bunched together to keep warm. Fortunately, after a few days of heat and nights of cold, they came across the well-known trader John Dunn, who clothed them and fathered the party down to the regions of civilisation.

Mr. Chauncey Depew has immortalised the American tourist who was so economical that when he went to Europe on his honeymoon he left his wife behind in America to save expense; but the Captain had a honeymoon experience not given to many, in that he was arrested and put into prison on his wedding night. While still on the South African station he married and went up-country for his honeymoon; in the evening he went out after dinner to smoke a pipe and post a letter. While strolling along at peace with the world he was accosted by a policeman, who said: "Are you smoking?" "Yes," said the Captain. "Do you mean to say that you own you are smoking?"

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"Yes," was the reply. Whereupon the policeman arrested him and took him to the police station. It appeared that there was a law against smoking in the streets, since every house of the village was thatched and the risk of fire was considerable. In the end my friend had to send for the bride to bail him out.

The Captain had strong views on the rivalry between Church and State. It is customary, whenever Divine Service or Morning Prayers are being read on board a man-of-war, to hoist a special flag called the "Church Pennant" so that "other ships may take heed not to disturb the service." It is also usual when the ensign is flying at the "peak"[1] to lower the ensign and hoist the Church Pennant in its place, but the Captain would have none of this. He never forgot the struggle which lasted from the murder of the arrogant prelate, Thomas à Becket, and the subsequent penance of Henry II, down to the dissolution of the monastries by Henry VIII. He insisted on the ensign being kept flying with the Church Pennant below it, thus indicating the ascendancy of the State over the Church.

On one occasion he had a difference of opinion with the Accountant-General Department and they scored, but he waited his time. Not long after he got a voucher ordering him to pay a seaman three or four shillings, and he noticed that the document was stamped with a rubber stamp cut with the name of the Accountant-General. He accordingly wrote to this high official pointing out the irregularity and asking if he was to pay the money. The reply he received was that all

[1] The peak is the end of the pole that sticks out behind the top of the aftermost mast.

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instructions received from the Accountant-General should be complied with. He then dipped his pen in vitriol and wrote through the Commander-in-Chief to the Board of Admiralty and asked up to what sums they considered he should pay on documents signed with a rubber stamp. Of course this went to the Financial and other Secretaries, who had not the labour of signing documents, and he received a reply telling him that on no account whatever was he ever to pay money on documents so signed, so the Accountant-General's Department was cursed with having to sign hundreds of additional documents daily as a result of his crusade.

When the *Renown*, Sir John Fisher's flagship, joined the Mediterranean Station her officers assumed rather a superior air. They had been on a little out-of-the-way station where there were no other battleships, and their conversation rather implied that they would show our poor Fleet how to do things properly. The first rock they struck was a burlesque give on board the *Empress of India*. We had had some experience, having had one the year before. We had plenty of time while at Crete to write the piece and put in a lot of topical songs, and we had some really excellent amateurs. We arranged for the ship to be berthed alongside the dockyard and rigged a theatre on board, a huge bell tent of canvas 60 feet high by about 70 feet diameter at the deck, and we lined the whole with foreign ensigns. The proscenium was about 30 feet high. It made a gorgeous theatre. Such an erection, however, could not be made watertight nor was it warranted to stand a gale of wind. All through the day a grigale, that is a south-easterly gale,

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threatened, and during the performance ominous creakings of some of the spars made me pray that the fates would be kind. Everything went excellently, and it gave the *Renown* something to think of. But half an hour after everyone had left, the rain came, and in ten minutes the whole theatre was a marsh. Thus one hour only had stood between success and disaster.

A peculiar accident occurred during the construction of the Corradino football ground, which would have been comic had it not been rather tragic. While the blasting operations were in progress two "shots" were prepared at the same time by two separate men in two different parts of the grounds. After the fuses had been ignited the two men as usual ran away from their charges to what each thought was a safe place, but as a matter of fact each ran and sat down on the other man's charge. Each man seeing his friend in danger rose and gesticulated wildly to make him clear out, but neither appreciated his own critical position. The charges blew up at the same moment and both men were injured.

A great event to the *Empress* was our inspection by Sir John Fisher. The official inspections of a man-of-war are matters of great moment to everyone on board. The reputation of the ship rests on the result. The Captain is directly implicated, the promotion of the Commander and First Lieutenant depend on the good report, and everyone feels the gravity of the day.

I remember hearing of one inspection which took place in China which is worth recording as a small vignette of the Old Navy. It was only a gunboat that

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was being submitted to the ordeal, but her Commander was due for promotion and he had earned a good reputation with the Admiral for work up the rivers. The ship was clean and smart, and so confident was the Commander of a good inspection that he asked the Admiral to inspect the ship personally, instead of leaving it to the Flag-Captain as was frequently the case with smaller ships. The Admiral consented, and the day arrived.

Well can we picture the hot morning and calm blue seas, the ship glistening with her paint immaculate and the brasswork gleaming as only that of a man-of-war can. The little gunboat looked more beautiful than she had ever looked before. The last round on board had been gone, the last uttermost ultra bit of tittivating done; the First Lieutenant had been rowed slowly round the ship to examine her externally, and had been pulled ahead to see that the yards were square and that when viewed abeam every rope was taut. He was satisfied; she was perfect.

The Admiral came on board, was received with a guard, and started his round of inspection, praising this, asking a question about that, evidently pleased at the appearance of everything. He arrived at the fo'c'sle climbed the ladder, looked at the anchor gear, and was just leaving to go down again when his eye lighted on the wash-deck locker. Now a wash-deck locker is a box about 6 or 7 feet long and 2 feet wide, in which brooms and brushes and squeegees and such-like housemaid's implements for cleaning the deck are kept. The inside of these should be kept as tidy as the outside, with brushes with their handles clean and neatly stowed. As an old Commander who knew these

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minute points the Admiral told the Captain to have the locker opened so that he could look at the inside. The lid was lifted, and lo and behold! therein lay a dead sailor. The consternation of all can well be imagined. The inspection ended in gloom and disaster.

The explanation was simple and foolish enough. That morning one of the crew had come off drunk, and to avoid having a drunken prisoner on the day of the inspection his messmates had stupidly laid him on his back in the locker, hoping he would sleep off the effects of his carouse—but unfortunately he was suffocated.

To return to the *Empress of India*. Sir John gave us a tremendous hustle—we got out the torpedo net defence, cleared for action, then got out the bower anchor, went to fire quarters. Deserted ship—that is, sent all the ship's company away in the boats as if the ship was sinking. All in the space of two hours, and then he left us to replace the debris and get the ship again into a reasonable state.

Sir John was at that time obsessed with a mania of everything being done in the shortest time on record. On board his flagship he gave dinners on the quarter-deck, one side being screened off for the purpose. After dinner he and his guests moved to the other side of the deck and a party of men, specially drilled, cleared and removed the table. Crockery might be broken and glass suffer, but three minutes was the time allowed for the deck to be cleared and the screen removed.

Sir John had a nimble brain. While Commander-in-Chief on the North American Station, the Fashoda incident loomed up, relations with France were strained almost to breaking point—in fact war might have

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broken out had it not been that the money voted for stores and ammunition for the French Navy had been diverted departmentally to re-arm the Field Artillery. In a war with Great Britain the Navy was indispensable, whereas Field Artillery was practically useless. It was for this reason that the French Government found it impossible to declare war.

However, this was not known to us at the time, and every preparation was made to fight if necessary. We in the *Empress* were bundled out of Crete and hurried to Malta to coal. In North America Sir John came to the conclusion that the proper place for his flagship the *Renown* was with the Atlantic Fleet. He therefore instructed the officer next senior to him in his Fleet that, on the declaration of war, he intended to sail for Gibraltar in the *Renown*, and that he, the senior Captain, was to proceed with another fast ship to Devil's Island, arrive off the coast at night, cut the telegraph wires, seize Dreyfus and carry him over to Europe and land him somewhere on the French coast. The idea was that his arrival would rekindle and fan the old flame of controversy that had embittered the civil life of the country by dividing families and severing the ties of friendship and lifelong associations. To what extent the scheme would have borne fruit it is impossible to hazard a guess, but it would at all events have been a material addition to the cares of the French Government at the moment when the utmost concentration on their part was imperative, and unity of all parties and sections was essential, for carrying on so strenuous and fateful a war.

Sir John also had an uncanny prescience as to the habits and thoughts of the human race in all its grades.

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Just as Mr. Rudyard Kipling throws himself into and appreciates the doings of every class of man, however technical his profession may be, so Sir John could foresee their line of thought. His entry into Malta was marked by a characteristic episode.

Arriving early one Sunday morning, he sent an officer ashore to the Chief Constructor of the Dockyard to tell him to have the Admiral's dghaisa (steward's boat) alongside the flagship at 9 a.m. He added: "The Chief Constructor will tell you that it is Sunday and that he has no men to launch the boat, but you will tell him the boat is to be here at 9 a.m." Sure enough as soon as the officer gave the message to the Constructor the latter said word for word what Sir John had prophesied. The officer remarked that the Commander-in-Chief had said that the excuse would be given, and added that nevertheless the boat was to be alongside at 9 o'clock; and needless to say it arrived. Men henceforward began to appreciate that someone who differed somewhat from ordinary mortals had arrived to take command of the station.

I came to be associated with Sir John in an unexpected manner. Soon after his arrival he appointed a committee to prepare schemes for the Fleet Manœuvres. I was one of those selected. He saw us all, and addressed us in his usual breezy style, and among other things he told us that he had just come from the Hague, where he had met some German Admirals who argued with him that our Fleet was useless, as the Germans in war-time would sink the whole lot with their torpedo-boats and destroyers. "Now," he said, "I have come out here and we will prove that this is all nonsense." At the same time he said he would be

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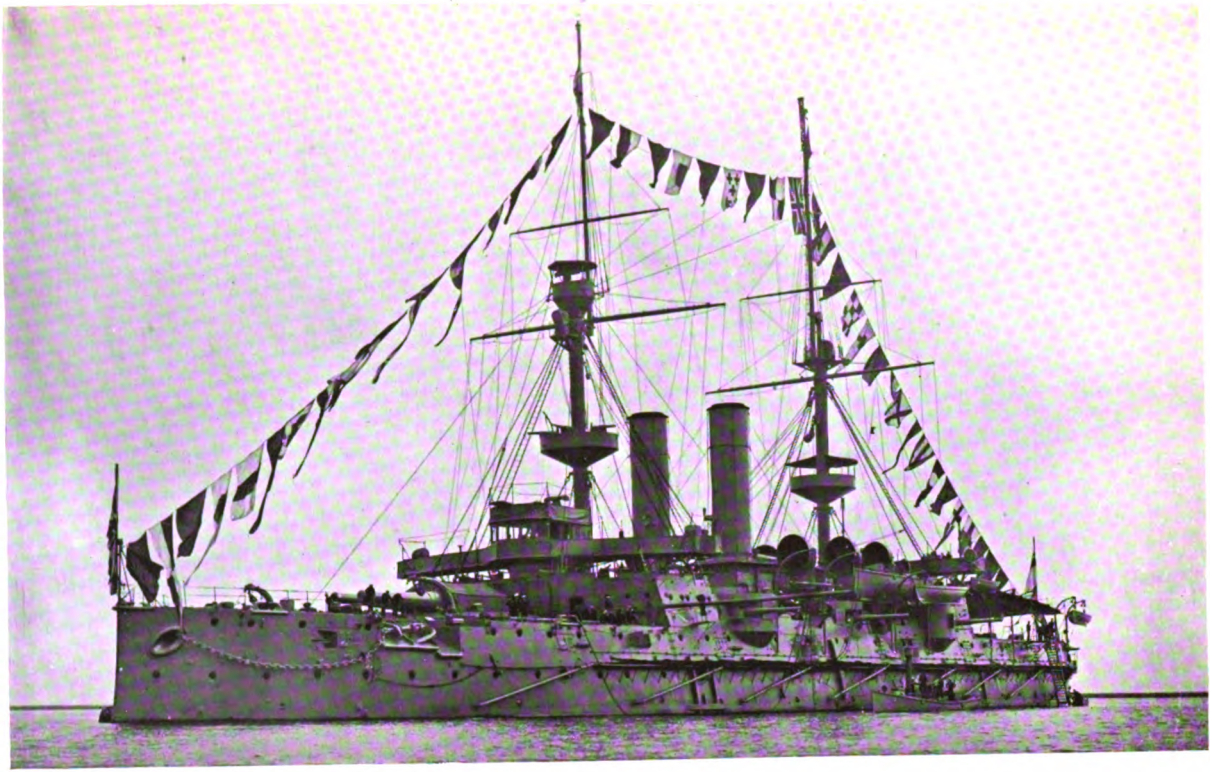

[*Abrahams & Sons, Devonport.*

H.M.S. "EMPRESS OF INDIA."

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glad to receive any suggestions for torpedo-boat manœuvres. One morning shortly afterwards it struck me I might send him some ideas, as I had spent many years studying this matter and I had commanded a torpedo-boat and at times a flotilla in five annual manœuvres at home. So I sat down and sketched out a programme suitable for the rather antiquated craft we had at Malta and sent this to him. Next morning I was considerably astonished to receive a long signal eulogising me and my screed, and ordering me to call at Admiralty House at noon. I toiled up to see him, we had a long talk, and I left with a sheaf of papers to examine and remark on. After this he kept me constantly at work—both on Fleet and torpedo-boat manœuvres and on preparations for war.

There was a large unused room in his house; in this was a long table and on the table blocks of wood representing the ships of the Fleet and the torpedo craft. I arranged the ships for cruising in war-time with the attendant torpedo screen, and this formed the basis of his discussion with the senior officers of the Fleet—occasionally I found the arrangement altered to suit other ideas, but I never hesitated to rearrange them, and in the end my obstinacy succeeded.

It was about this time that he started collecting material for his reforms, and for the design of the *Dreadnought*. He worked me very hard up to June 1900, when I was promoted and left the station. Of course I was not the only one he made to work for him. Every officer with ideas was consulted and their views assimilated, till Sir John became the embodiment of the advanced ideas of all classes of officers of the Fleet.

I cannot translate adequately into words the buoy-

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ant joy and relief that I felt when I found that at last I was serving under a master-mind, open to imbibe the latest ideas, however crude; and, moreover, under a man having the energy and influence to see new ideas carried out. It seemed as if the Navy at last was to be roused from its lethargic condition, that shortly it would arise and stretch itself, throw off old traditions and become a real live fighting service. Sir John Fisher began even then to formulate the slogan which became his battle cry during his best years: "The fighting efficiency of the Fleet and its instant readiness for war."

The beginnings were indeed at the moment small in extent, and of course the old shell-backs repeated the shibboleth—and no bigger lie was ever invented—"that Fisher only worked for himself and his own interests." I can say after years of intimate connection with Lord Fisher that I never knew him do one single thing that he did not whole-heartedly believe was for the good of the Navy, or any action that he thought would be to his own advantage but detrimental to the Service.

Working with a cross between a whirlwind and a wizard was not all joy. At Malta, Sir Francis Grenfell, the Governor, a soldier of advanced views, had started a joint naval and military society where papers on subjects of interest to the two Services were read and discussed. Of course I chipped in, and the Governor was most kind and I saw a good deal of him. When Sir John Fisher enlisted me as one of his devils, in the literary sense, he gave me to understand that he disapproved of naval officers joining in these debates—but that he did not wish his disapproval made public, as it might be misconstrued. So I was placed

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in the awkward position of having to give up the society without assigning a reason to Sir Francis Grenfell. Undoubtedly Sir John wished to rope in all the ideas of the younger element of the Navy and make use of them, but he did not wish to create friction with the Governor. I was young, and then had not sufficient experience to deal with the situation. This was my first experience of being a grain of wheat between the millstones of expediency.

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CHAPTER XVI

GENERAL REVIEW

Now that such scraps as memory has retained of my first twenty-three years of service in the Navy have been collected and loosely woven together, it is well to survey the period they cover from a more serious standpoint than that of mere incident and reminiscence.

We may look on the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the closing chapter in the history of the Old Navy. Sailing ships were fast vanishing, and with them the majority of the older officers who had joined the Service when sailing comprised the whole knowledge of a seaman. Many of these had found it impossible to bend their minds and accommodate their lives to the fundamental alterations wrought by the domination of modern thought and invention over the equipment and functions of the Navy. But on the other hand there were among them some men who would have made worldwide reputations had our country been involved in a war of magnitude. Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, the father of modern steam tactics, was a man in whom, in the seventies and eighties, the Navy had absolute reliance. George Tryon, a leader much looked up to by all of us to the very moment of his tragic death. Michael Culme-Seymour was *facile princeps* among our Admirals during the nineties until

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the star of John Fisher appeared above the horizon. Then as an administrator Frederick Richards was without a rival. He gauged the wiles of the politicians and withstood their attempts at cheeseparing with an iron stolidity. He knew the difficulty of defeating such arguments as "the Navy would still be strong enough if the laying down of one battleship was delayed till the following year," or that "it could not really destroy our naval preponderance if one torpedo boat were omitted from the building programme." He knew that the average Englishman, not being a naval expert, looked to him to hoist the danger signal by retiring from the office of First Sea Lord if he considered that the Navy was being starved. It was not a matter of loyalty to his colleagues or to the Government, but his plain duty to the country was to inform them in an unmistakable manner if he considered that the politicians were imperilling the safety of the Empire. He therefore annually put forward a building programme that, in his view, was the minimum that was desirable, stuck to it, and permitted no variation whatever from it.

It might be well if modern Lords of the Admiralty were to follow his example. At one time we were told that it was essential that the Navy should have its own Air Service, and shortly afterwards that a dock at Singapore was an absolute necessity. Both of these necessities were refused by the politicians and yet the Board of Admiralty remained in office. Either the proposals which were put forward were extravagant and unnecessary, in which case the Board were to blame, or the proposals were necessary, in which case the Board was still more to blame for acquiescing in

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decisions which were antagonistic to the efficiency of the Navy and the safety of the Empire.

Two other men of note who left their mark on the Navy were William White, one of the Directors of Naval Construction, and John Durston, Engineer-in-Chief of the Navy, to whose courage we owe the introduction of water-tube boilers.

The twenty-five years I have skimmed over had been those of peace at sea. It is true that occasionally serenity was ruffled by incidents such as the Zulu and South African wars, and the Egyptian and Sudanese campaigns, but these affected the Navy little. Rumours and alarm bubbled to the surface annually, the chief of these being the Russo-Turkish War, the Pendjeh and Fashoda incidents, friction over Montenegro in 1881, and Morocco later on ; but there was no clash of arms of sufficient moment to test the efficiency of either the material or the personnel of the Navy.

It was indeed fortunate that this was so, for during the ten years from 1880 to 1890 our Navy was lamentably weak, and it is doubtful if during this period we could have emerged victorious if we had drifted into a war with France. Up to 1887 naval construction was responsible for providing *samples* of ships—*Inflexible*, *Victoria*, *Agamemnon*, and so on. An attempt at building to type was made with the *Admiral* class, but they proved to be hopelessly bad seaboats and miserably armoured. No other type battleships that ever were built were such veritable death-traps as those monstrosities. It was not till Sir William White designed the battleships for the Naval Defence Act of 1887 that battleship construction was raised to a level worthy of the age.

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The Naval Defence Act was the salvation of the British Navy and of the country. It lifted us at once from a low sea-power to a preponderating position on the oceans of the world ; even so it was but a beginning, a making up for lost time, a preparation for the work that was to come after. Sir William White gave us the *Majestic* class, but he never was able to conceive the design of a really fine cruiser. For this he blamed the Board of Admiralty. If, however, he is given the credit for his success in the creating of the battleship, he must take the blame for his failure in the case of the cruisers.

Without doubt during all these early strivings in naval construction there was a lack of knowledge among naval officers generally as to what were the essential functions of a battleship and what were the *desiderata* in cruiser design. The constructor, therefore, was without sure guidance in ship design, and as a result he was unable to interpret the real needs of the Navy.

Apart from actual type of design it is almost inconceivable that those twenty-five years could have wrought the change that they did in material. Even more extraordinary still is the way in which inventions and scientific discoveries were accumulating and waiting for co-ordinate thought to harness them to the needs of the Navy. The roots of the Service had sucked up the food, the sap had swelled the buds, till in 1900 much was being brought to the brink of fruition, waiting only for the master-hand to co-ordinate and direct.

Steam had superseded sail-power, masts and yards had been tardily abolished, water-tube boilers had been

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forced into the Navy by the pluck of John Durston and the grim backing of Arthur Wilson as Controller, but the turbine and oil fuel were yet to come. The turbine had been invented, it had already for ten years been used for auxiliary work on board, but the turbine of a size necessary to supplant the main engines, and which in one swoop was to increase the fighting efficiency of every ship at least 80 per cent., had so far not been manufactured.

Gun design was following slowly in the track of improvement in the manufacture of steel, hampered and kept back chiefly because no one saw how the increase in range of guns could be put to practical use in action. Ideas were limited because vision was limited. Instead of improving the gun boldly, and leaving to "necessity" the problem of inventing methods of using the improvements, progress was stunted because no one could immediately see how the improvements could be put into practical use. How often is not this the case in all walks of life! How often do we not find a new suggestion turned down because the query "What is the good of it?" cannot be immediately answered! It is impossible to develop the use of any single thing until that thing is constructed and used. Development comes with use, rarely from theory. So it was with the gun. It was not till the seemingly *impossible* was tackled during the last two years of the century that it was found that gun ranges of seven to ten thousand yards were not impracticable for use in action.

The case-hardened older generations immediately asked: "Why should ranges be increased? We can hammer at the enemy at short range much the same

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as Nelson did, why not continue to do so?" The more far-seeing replied that "the Fleet that could hit at the greatest range would reap a great advantage in the opening stages of an action." The memory of old-time tactics dimmed the vision of many of the old officers and prevented their seeing clearly that, even if the British Navy preferred a "bull at the gate," "hammer and tongs" action at short ranges, which threw training and science to the winds and left victory or defeat to chance happenings in the lap of the gods, an enemy practised in long-range shooting could wing and disable our ships before ever they were able to get a shot home. Against all these prejudices long-range shooting was commencing to make headway, but January 1900 still saw three thousand yards as the practical range of a British Fleet in action.

Up to this time increase in muzzle velocity had been looked on chiefly as giving more momentum to the projectile, and therefore greater armour-piercing capacity. Although armour had passed from wrought iron to "compound" and on to "Krupp's cemented," no greater protection to our ships had been afforded, since increase in muzzle velocity of the gun, and consequent penetrating power on the part of the projectile, had kept pace with these improvements in armour. Increase of gun range, however, was preparing to come to the help of armour, and the increase in effective range of the torpedo was in its turn foreshadowing the necessity of a wider separation of opposing fleets in action.

Wireless, thanks to Signor Marconi and Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, who in the beginning worked neck-and-neck with the gifted Italian scientist, had made a

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memorable start and already messages had been received at distances up to thirty miles, so that a complete revolution in scouting and co-ordination of effort among vessels widely separated had already made a sporadic start. It is worth noting that when Marconi offered his patents to the British Admiralty the matter was referred by them, in a fit of insanity, to the Signal Committee, an estimable body who knew the colour of every flag and all about the Morse code, but to whom electricity was a sealed science. It is little to be wondered at that they should have reported against the adoption of wireless for fear that it should *blow up the ship's magazine*! The patents were therefore refused. In spite of this, wireless thrived.

Hence we see at the close of the year 1899 every weapon at sea was on the verge of developments so revolutionary in character as to change in a few years the whole tactics of the Navy and sea warfare. The personnel of the Navy had always been zealous and loyal and deeply imbued with the *esprit de corps* of that Service, but by far the larger majority thought little of strategy and tactics—in fact these words to the majority were merely symbolical and without practical meaning. The more advanced among naval thinkers advocated the study of naval history; but naval histories were for the most part mere records of facts, and never discussed or even hinted at the links which bound the doings of the Navy with the political and military exigencies of the moment. It was not until Captain Mahan wrote *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* that the curtain was raised and the study of naval strategy became universal.

I can remember no event in my time in the Navy

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so epoch-making as the publication of Mahan's first works. It was some years before the teaching conveyed in his writings filtered deeply into the brains of naval officers, but by 1900 the majority of the more advanced of them had studied these masterpieces and had their minds prepared to study the strategy that would be required of the Navy in future wars.

So we find that the end of the century saw the final scenes of the passing of the Old Navy, and the birth of the New Navy, which in truth was old enough in traditions and *esprit de corps*; but new, not only in material and the fruits of invention, but new in ideas, and in fuller knowledge of the means and uses to which that material could be put to the furtherance of our strength afloat and our assured domination of the seas.

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